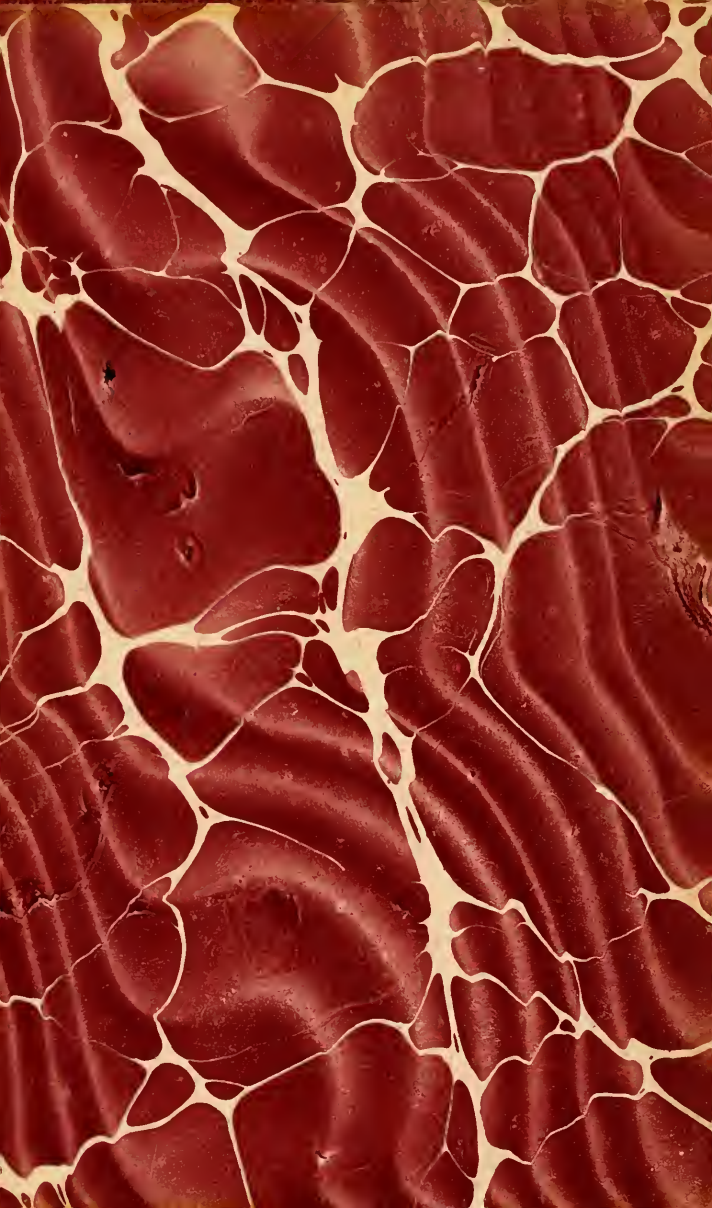








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THE NOVELS OF
WILLIAM HARRISON
AINSWORTH
VOLUME XVII

CRICHTON

VOLUME II



WINDSOR EDITION

LONDON
GIBBINGS & COMPANY, LIMITED
PHILADELPHIA: J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

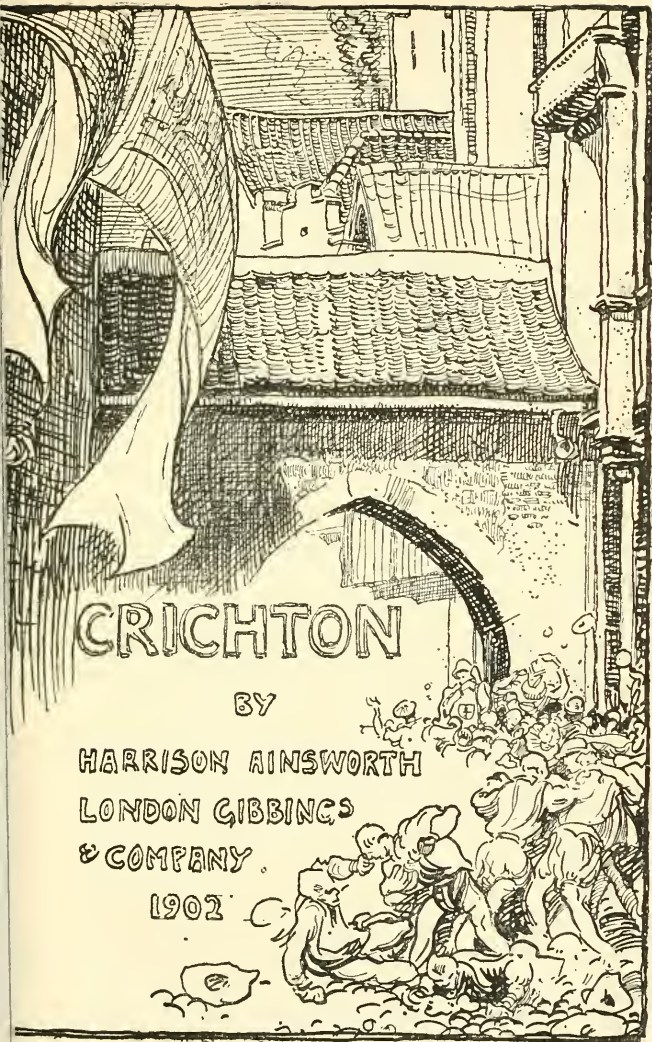
CRICHTON

VOL. II



The Descent of the Column.





CRICHTON

BY

HARRISON AINSWORTH

LONDON GIBBINGS

& COMPANY.

1902

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CRICHTON

BOOK THE SECOND (*continued*)

XIV

The Two Masks.

One of these men is genius to the other
—Which is the natural man,
And which the spirit?—Who shall decypher them?
—*Comedy of Errors.*

SUSPENDED over the pallet upon which she lay, a lamp threw a faint light upon the features of the unfortunate singer. Her countenance was deathly pale; and though her slumber was calm, it was evidently not the repose induced by "nature's best nurse," but the torpor occasioned by some medicated potion. Escaped from their confinement, her raven tresses wandered over her person, still clothed in the boyish garb of the morning, and their dusky hue contrasted strikingly with the exceeding fairness of her neck and throat, now partially exposed by the disorder of her habiliments. Something there was in her situation so touching as powerfully to enlist the sympathies of the cavalier in her behalf; and (shall we injure him in the esteem of our fair readers if we confess so much?) something so resistless in her beauty as to awaken in his bosom a momentary emotion, more akin to love than to pity. In palliation of this brief disloyalty, we may add

that Catherine de Medicis—hitherto a stranger to the attractions of the Gelosa—as she regarded her features with some attention, was so struck with her beauty, that she no longer felt any surprise at the extravagant passion with which she had inspired her illustrious admirer.

“By our Lady!” she exclaimed, “the girl is fairer than I thought her. Is it possible that that lovely creature can be lowly born?”

“It would seem not, from the amulet I hold,” replied the cavalier.

“Permit me to examine that key more narrowly, signor,” said Ruggieri, advancing towards them. “I may be able to resolve her majesty’s question. Meantime, I pray you take this phial. The damsel sleeps, as you perceive, but let her breathe from this flagon, and her slumbers will at once be dissipated.”

“’Twere better she should awake no more than to dishonour,” murmured the cavalier, as he took the phial, and restored the golden key to Ruggieri. “Poor girl!” he mentally ejaculated, as he approached the couch—“my chance of rescuing thee from persecution, and from what is worse than death, is now slight indeed. But the attempt shall be made. I have vowed to accomplish thy rescue, and I will accomplish it, or perish in the effort!”

And with these musings he employed the phial as directed by Ruggieri, nor had he to wait long for the result of his application. The Gelosa started and unclosed her eyes; but, as her gaze fell upon the cavalier’s sable mask, with a scream of terror she hastily averted her head.

“He here again,” she shrieked—“Mother of Mercy, shield me from this demon!”

The cavalier bent his head over the shrinking maiden, and in a low tone breathed in her ear her name—“Ginevra.”

Not more suddenly does the falcon turn her wing at

her master's call, than did the Gelosa start at the cavalier's voice. Trembling from head to foot, she raised herself upon the couch—she bent her gaze upon his figure—she peered into the holes of his mask as if to seek some further confirmation of her hopes—she dashed aside her blinding tresses, passed her fingers rapidly across her brow, as if to collect her scattered senses, and in a low tone exclaimed, "That voice—do I still dream?—that voice coupled with that hideous phantom—methinks I heard my own name pronounced by tones, so loved, so tender; but it must have been a dream—how should he know my name? Oh! I am very faint." And she again sank backwards.

The cavalier regarded her with deep commiseration; but, scarcely knowing how far in her present state of excitement it would be prudent to trust her with a knowledge of his plans, he deemed it advisable to resume the disguised tone of voice he had adopted in his conference with Catherine. "For whom do you take me, Ginevra?" he asked.

"For whom!" exclaimed the maiden—"I took you for an angel of light, but I find you are a spirit of darkness. Hence, and leave me. Torture me no longer with your presence. Have I not already endured agony at your hands? Must dishonour likewise be my portion? Never. I have resisted all your efforts—your blandishments—your entreaties—your force—and I will continue to resist you. I can yet defy your power, as I defied you in your palace at Mantua. Woman's love may be fickle, but her hate is constant. I hate you, prince, and I will die a thousand deaths rather than yield me to your embraces."

As Ginevra spoke, she became, for the first time, aware of the disordered state of her apparel. If her complexion had been heretofore as white as that of the mountain snow, its hue was as suddenly changed as that of the same snow when it is tinged by the purpling

sunset. Neck, cheek, and throat were turned to crimson by the hot and blushing tide, while shame, mingled with resentment, was vividly depicted upon her glowing countenance.

"Ah! false and felon knight," she cried bitterly, "thou hast done well to steal upon a maiden's privacy—upon her slumbers; but get hence or, by the Virgin, I will tear off this bandage from my wound and breathe out my life before thine eyes. Ah! why was not that blow more surely aimed—why did I not perish in saving Crichton!"

"And do you love Crichton thus devotedly?" asked the cavalier.

"Do I love him?" repeated Ginevra—"do I love heaven—adore its saints—hate thee? Love him!" she continued passionately—"he is to me life—nay, more than life. Understand me—thou whose dark heart can only couple love with desire—the affection which I bear to Crichton is that of the devotee for the saint. He is my heart's idol, its divinity. I aspire not to his love. I ask for no return. I am content to love without hope. It were happiness too much to die for him; but, having failed in that, think not I will live for another."

"Then live for him!" said the cavalier in an undertone, and resuming his natural voice.

To describe the effect produced upon the Gelosa by these words, and by the sudden change of tone, were impossible. She passed her hand across her brow—she gazed upon her masked companion in doubt and amazement, and then exclaimed under her breath, and with a look as if her life hung upon the issue of her inquiry, "Is it?"

"It is," returned the cavalier. And her head declined upon his shoulder.

Catherine was not more surprised at this sudden change in the Gelosa's manner than the astrologer.

"Thy spell begins to work, good father," she said; "the girl relents."

"Maledizione!" returned Ruggieri furiously.

"How!—art thou not satisfied with thine own handiwork?" demanded Catherine, in surprise; "thou art distraught."

"'Tis because it is mine own handiwork that I am distraught," returned the astrologer. "My gracious mistress," he continued, throwing himself at the queen's feet, who viewed his conduct with increased astonishment, "I have served you faithfully——"

"Go to—what wouldst thou?"

"I ask a boon in requital of my long services—a light request, madame."

"Name it."

"Suffer not yon girl to quit the chamber to-night. Or, if she must go hence, let me accompany her."

Catherine returned no answer, but clapping her hands together, the dwarf, in obedience to her signal, rushed to the trap-door.

To return to the cavalier. His efforts, seconded by his kindly words, speedily restored the Gelosa to consciousness. Gently disengaging herself from his embrace, and casting down her large eyes, as if fearing to meet his gaze, she thus, in a low tone, addressed him: "Pardon me, noble signor, my late freedom of speech. My lips have betrayed the secret of my heart; but, on my soul, I would not so have spoken had I deemed that my words would ever have reached your ears."

"I need not that assurance, fair Ginevra," returned the cavalier; "and it pains me to think that your love is fixed upon one who can only requite your devotion with a brother's tenderness. But listen to me. With this key you will pass, by a subterranean outlet, to the Hôtel de Soissons. Escape will then be easy. Tarry without its walls, on the quarter nigh the church of Saint Eustache, for an hour. If in that space I join

you not, depart, and go upon the morrow to the Louvre. Seek out the Demoiselle Esclairmonde—do you mind that name, Ginevra?”

“I do,” gasped the Gelosa.

“You will find her amongst the attendants of the Queen Louise. Bear to her this paper.”

“’Tis stained with blood,” cried Ginevra, as she received the letter.

“’Tis traced with my dagger’s point,” rejoined the cavalier. “Will you convey it to her?”

“I will.”

“And now,” continued the cavalier, “collect all your energies, fair maiden. You must leave this chamber alone.”

“And you——”

“Heed me not; a fate dearer than mine hangs upon that paper—upon your safety. You have said you love me. You have approved your devotion. But I claim a further proof. Whatever you may hear or see, tarry not. When I bid you, go. You have a poignard—ha?”

“What Italian woman is without one?”

“It is well. You who dread not to die, need fear nothing. Your hand. I am once more the mask. Be firm—ha—it is too late.”

The latter exclamation was uttered as the cavalier perceived the trap-door open, and Catherine’s guard ascend. One by one the dark figures stepped upon the floor. At last the mask appeared, bound, and conducted by Loupgarou and Caravaja.

“What means this?” inquired the affrighted Gelosa.

“Ask not, but follow me,” replied the cavalier, advancing quickly towards the queen.

“Madame,” he exclaimed, “before this execution takes place, I pray you suffer this maiden to withdraw. Let her await our coming forth within the corridor of your palace.”

“Be it so,” returned Catherine.

"Go," whispered the cavalier to Ginevra—"you have the key—there is the masked door."

"She stirs not hence," said Ruggieri, seizing the maiden's arm.

"What mean'st thou, old man," cried the cavalier. "What right hast thou to oppose her departure?"

"A father's right," returned Ruggieri—"she is my child."

"Thy child!" screamed the Gelosa, recoiling—"oh! no—no—not thy child."

"Thou art the daughter of Ginevra Malatesta—thou art likewise my daughter."

"Believe him not, dear signor," cried the Gelosa, clinging to the cavalier—"he raves—I am not his daughter."

"By my soul, I speak the truth," ejaculated Ruggieri.

"My patience is exhausted," exclaimed the queen. "Let the girl tarry where she is. I have not done with her. Crichton's execution shall no longer be delayed."

"His execution!" cried the Gelosa, with a thrilling scream. "Is it Crichton whom you would put to death?"

"Be calm," whispered the cavalier; "heed not me, but in the confusion make good your own escape."

"Thou hast said it, maiden," returned Catherine, sternly smiling—"that mask conceals thy lover's features——"

"That mask!—ha!"

At this moment Catherine again clapped her hands. There was an instant movement amongst the men-at-arms. Quick as thought the mask was dragged forwards. A block of wood was placed upon the ground by Caravaja. The sword of Loupgarou gleamed in the air.

The cavalier placed himself between Catherine and the executioners. His hand was laid upon his vizard.

"You have said the withdrawal of your mask should be the signal of Crichton's doom," cried the queen, addressing the cavalier; "are you prepared, signor?"

"I am prepared, madame," replied the cavalier calmly, "to meet my own fate. Not against yon mask, but against me, must your vengeance be directed."

And, as he spoke, he withdrew his vizard.

"Malediction!" exclaimed Catherine, as she beheld the features of the Scot; "traitor!—have we then been thy dupe all this while—have I been betrayed into the avowal of my most secret schemes—into the commission of a grievous and scarce pardonable indignity to my nearest and dearest ally? Have I—but thy cunning shall avail thee little—*Dieu merci!*—thou art still in my power. Don Vincenzo," she continued, turning to the mask, whose vizard having been in the confusion hastily removed by Caravaja, discovered dark and haughty lineaments, inflamed with choler, but strongly impressed with the lofty and peculiar character proper to the southern noble—(a character which the reader will at once understand if he will call to mind the grave and majestic Venetian faces of Titian)—"Don Vincenzo," said Catherine, addressing the prince, who still remained surrounded by the guard—"what reparation can I offer you for the affront I have thus unintentionally put upon you."

"One only reparation will I accept," cried Vincenzo, proudly shaking off the grasp of Loupgarou, and advancing towards the queen.

"Give me to understand your wishes," returned Catherine.

"I claim the life of my adversary," returned Gonzaga.

"Now, by my soul, prince," said Catherine, in a deep whisper, "you have asked a boon I cannot grant. Crichton's life is necessary to my safety—to your safety. He must die."

"He shall die, madame, upon the morrow," returned Vincenzo, in the same tone; "but the blazon of Gonzaga were for ever stained—my honour as a knight for ever spotted—if he, whom I have defied to

mortal combat, should be assassinated in my presence. He must be set free."

"Never," replied Catherine ; " his death will lie at my door. He is in possession of my schemes—of Anjou's plot—and of a secret of vital import, which I deemed I had communicated to yourself ; no, he must die."

" I had rather perish upon the block, by the hands of those miscreants, than suffer my honour to be thus sullied," exclaimed Gonzaga. " Hear me, madame," he cried aloud. " Suffer him to depart, and I will gage my princely faith that the Chevalier Crichton betrays no secret—reveals no plot. The laws of honour, imperative on me, are not less binding upon him. Let him depart without fear, and entrust the work of vengeance to me. To-morrow we meet as mortal enemies—to-night we part as fair foemen."

" Gage not your faith for me, prince," said Crichton, who with sword and dagger fiercely confronted his assailants ; " I can neither accept life nor freedom upon the terms you propose. If I depart hence, the secret I have obtained will be revealed—nay, if my voice be silenced in death, my last gasp will be cheered with the conviction that other tongues than mine will breathe it for me."

" Ha !" exclaimed Catherine.

" My vengeance will survive me, madame," continued the Scot. " You may float this chamber with my blood—may hew me limb from limb ; but that secret will escape you—nay, it has already escaped you. I may never behold her more, may never exchange word with her again ; but, ere to-morrow's sun shall set, the proof of her birth will be laid before the Princess of Condé."

" Thou liest !" cried Catherine.

" Where are the despatches of Tavannes, the letters of the Cardinal of Lorraine, your own written authority ?" demanded Crichton.

"Ha!" exclaimed Catherine, hastily glancing at the packet she held within her hand. "Traitor! where are they?"

"On their way to the Louvre," replied Crichton.

"Impossible!"

"I have found a faithful messenger——"

"En verdad, sa magestad, this braggart's only messenger can have been the great dog who accompanied him," exclaimed Caravaja. "The accursed brute dashed down the trap-door as we ascended, and I remarked that he had a scarf twisted round his throat."

"That scarf contained the letters," said Crichton, with a smile of triumph.

"And the hound escaped you?" demanded Catherine of the Spaniard.

"It is no dog, but a fiend in bestial shape," replied Caravaja; "the phantasm was out of sight in a moment."

"Chevalier Crichton," said Catherine, advancing towards him, and speaking in an undertone, "those papers are of more value to me than your life. I will capitulate with you. Upon the conditions offered to you by the Prince of Mantua, you may depart freely."

"I have said that I reject them, madame. Bid your assassins advance. To Heaven and Saint Andrew I commit my cause."

"I will die with you," murmured Ginevra.

"Rash girl, thou hast no part in this fray," cried Ruggieri; "hence with thy father."

"Never," shrieked the Gelosa; "I will never quit the Signor Crichton's side—the blow which is his death shall be mine likewise. Let me go, I say. I am not thy child. Thou hast invented this story to betray me."

"Hear me, Ginevra—I have proofs——"

"No, I will not listen to thee. Thou wouldst have

bartered my honour for the Prince of Mantua's gold. Was that a father's love? But if thou art my father, leave me, and draw not my blood, as well as that of my mother, upon thy head; for, by our Lady of Pity! I will plunge this steel to my heart rather than yield to thy licentious master."

"Ginevra, I would free thee from him. In mercy listen to me." But ere he could proceed, the fiery girl drew her dagger, and extricating herself from his grasp, once more took refuge by the side of Crichton.

Catherine, meantime, despite the indignant remonstrances of Gonzaga, who, being unarmed, could take no part in the conflict, had commanded the men-at-arms to assault the Scot.

"Upon him, knaves," she cried; "what do you fear?—he is but one—strike! and spare not."

Crichton breasted their fury, as the rock resists and hurls back the breakers. The gleam of their swords flashed in the eyes of the Gelosa; the clash of steel resounded in her ears. The strife was terrific. But amidst it all the Scot remained uninjured; not a thrust could reach him, while several desperate wounds were received by his antagonists. The vociferations, the clamour, the trampling of feet were deafening. Suddenly the noise ceased. Catherine looked to see if her enemy had fallen, but she beheld him in an attitude of defence, calmly regarding his antagonists, who had drawn back to take breath and consider upon some new plan of attack. Mortified and dismayed, the queen began to apprehend the issue of the combat might yet determine in favour of Crichton, when she beheld a dark figure stealing behind him. It was the dwarf. With stealthy steps she saw him approach the Scot. He bounded forward—a dagger was in his grasp—when at that moment he was felled by the stiletto of the Gelosa. Catherine could not restrain an exclamation of displeasure.

“Cravens,” she cried, “ye lack the nerves of men—give me a sword, and I will show you how to wield it.”

Thus exhorted, the ruffian band renewed the conflict, and with better success than before. A few blows only had been exchanged, when Crichton’s sword, a light rapier, intended more for ornament than use, was shivered, and with the exception of his poignard—a feeble defence against six trenchant blades, he lay at their mercy. A savage yell was raised by his opponents. A few moments more they saw would now decide the fight. Resolved, however, to sell his life dearly, Crichton darted forward, and seizing the foremost of the crew by the throat, plunged his dagger into his breast. The wretch fell with a deep groan. His comrades pressed on to avenge him. With his cloak twisted round his arm, Crichton contrived for some moments to ward off their blows and rid himself of another foe. But it was evident what must be the result of a contest so unequal: nevertheless, the Scot’s defence was so gallant as still to leave his enemies in doubt, when, as he seconded a feint with a thrust at Loupgarou, his foot slipped upon the floor, now floating in blood, and he stumbled. Swifter than thought Ginevra interposed her own person between Loupgarou and Crichton, and the blow intended for him must have transfixed her, had not a loud cry from Ruggieri arrested the hand of the giant.

“Spare my child!—spare her! my gracious mistress!” ejaculated the distracted astrologer.

But Catherine was deaf to his entreaties.

“Spare neither,” she said sternly.

Crichton, however, had recovered his feet. A word, even in that brief interval, had passed between him and the Gelosa. Ere his intention could be divined, he had flown, together with the maid, to the recess—and the curtains falling at the same moment to the

The Flight.





ground, concealed them from view. An instant afterwards, when these hangings were withdrawn by Caravaja and Loupgarou, they had disappeared. A masked door within the wall, half open, showed the means by which their flight had been effected. "Sangre de Dios!" cried Caravaja, as this door was suddenly closed, and a bar, as was evident from the sound, drawn across it on the other side, "our purpose is frustrated."

"Cap-dé-diou!" ejaculated Loupgarou, "whither doth that outlet lead?"

As he spoke, the giant felt his leg suddenly compressed by a nervous gripe, while at the same time, a noise like the hissing of a serpent sounded in his ears. Starting at the touch, Loupgarou beheld the red orbs of Elberich fixed upon him. The unfortunate mannikin, mortally wounded, had contrived to crawl towards him. The stream of life, flowing in thick and inky drops from his side, was ebbing fast—but the desire of vengeance lent him strength. Directing the giant's attention towards a particular part of the wall, he touched a spring and another but a smaller door flew open. Through this aperture the dwarf crept, beckoning Loupgarou, who with Caravaja and his two remaining followers instantly went after him.

Scarcely had the party disappeared, when the door through which Crichton had approached the turret from the queen's palace revolved upon its hinges, and the Vicomte de Joyeuse, accompanied by Chicot, and attended by an armed retinue, entered the chamber. He cast a quick glance round the room, and his countenance fell as he beheld the bloody testimonials of the recent fray.

"Monseigneur," he said, advancing towards Gonzaga, who remained motionless with his arms folded on his breast, "I have it in his majesty's commands to assure myself of your person till the morrow."

"A prisoner!" exclaimed Gonzaga, his hand vainly searching for his sword—"know you whom you thus address?"

"I know only that I address one whom I hold to be a loyal cavalier," returned Joyeuse quickly; "but when I gaze around this chamber, and behold these marks of butchery, doubts arise in my mind which I would fain have removed. Whom have I the honour to place under arrest?"

"The Prince of Mantua," replied Catherine; "the king's arrest cannot attach to him."

"Vive Dieu!" exclaimed the vicomte, "I am indeed much honoured. But you are mistaken, madame—his majesty's arrest does attach to the prince. Messieurs, to your charge I commit his highness. My duty, however, is only half fulfilled. May I crave to know where I shall meet with the Chevalier Crichton, if he be, as I conjecture, within this turret?"

"You will scarce need to assure yourself of his person, monseigneur," replied Catherine, smiling; "my attendants have already saved you that trouble."

"How, madame?" exclaimed Joyeuse, starting.

"Outcries and footsteps resound from this doorway," ejaculated Chicot. "Methinks I hear the voice of Crichton—there again—to the rescue, Monsieur le Vicomte."

"Prince," cried Joyeuse, "you shall answer to me for the life of the Chevalier Crichton. In his quarrel with you I was chosen his parrain, and by Saint Paul, if he have perished by assassination in your presence, I will proclaim you felon and craven, throughout every court in Christendom."

"Monsieur Vicomte, you do well to threaten a prisoner," replied Gonzaga haughtily. "But a season will arrive when you shall answer to me for these doubts."

"And to me likewise," added Catherine haughtily.

"Monsieur le Vicomte, I command you and your followers to withdraw, on pain of incurring my deadliest resentment."

"I am his majesty's representative, madame," returned Joyeuse proudly, "and invested with his authority to seek out and detain a noble cavalier, somewhat distinguished as 'the mask,' together with the Chevalier Crichton, during his sovereign pleasure. You are best aware what account you will render of the latter to his majesty."

"To the rescue! to the rescue! monseigneur," screamed Chicot. "I hear a female voice."

"My daughter! my daughter!" ejaculated Ruggieri.

"Some of you take charge of yon caitiff," exclaimed Joyeuse, pointing with his sword to the astrologer; "he is concerned, I doubt not, in this foul transaction—and now follow me who may! Montjoie! Saint Denis!—on!—"

So saying, he dashed through the narrow portal, and sprang swiftly up a dark and winding staircase, down which the echoes of oaths and other vociferations now distinctly resounded.

XV

The Column of Catherine de Medicis.

"On luy attachoit ung cable en quelque haute tour pendant en terre: par icelluy avecques deux mains montoit, puis devaloit si roidement, et si asseurément, que plus ne pourriez parmy ung pré bien egallé."—RABELAIS: *Gargantua*, Liv. i. chap. xxiii.

OPPOSITE the Rue de Viarmes, and reared against the circular walls of the Halle-au-Blé—with its base washed by a fountain—its shaft encircled by a cylindrical dial, and huge gnomonic projections, and its summit surmounted by a strange spherical cage of iron—stands,

at this day, a tall, fluted, richly decorated Doric column ; bearing upon its aspect the reverend impress of antiquity. The fountain and dial are of modern construction ; the spherical crest is ancient. Tradition assigns this observatory, for such it is, to Catherine de Medicis. From hence she is said to have nightly perused, within the starry scroll of heaven, the destinies of the great city stretched out at her feet ; while, from the same situation, Ruggieri is reported to have gathered the lore by which he was enabled to avert the stroke of danger, and strengthen and consolidate his mistress's power.

The iron cage alluded to, and which is supposed to have some recondite allusion to the mysteries of astrology, was, in all probability, contrived by the Florentine seer. Its form has given rise to much speculation. Consisting of a circular framework of iron, crossed by other circles, and supported by a larger hemisphere of iron bars—"des cercles et des demicercles entrelacés," says M. Pingré—the object of which it is difficult to conceive, unless they were intended as types of the science, to the uses of which the structure was devoted, and erected after the designs of the celebrated Jean Bullan, this pillar, situated, at the period under consideration, in the angle of a lateral court of the Hôtel de Soissons, is the sole remnant now existing of that vast and magnificent edifice. Its history is remarkable ; but it may suffice to say, that it was preserved from the general demolition of Catherine's palace, by the generosity of a private individual, Le Sieur Petit de Bachaumont, by whom it was redeemed at the price of 1500 livres. The effect of the observatory is materially injured by its contiguity to the Halle-au-Blé, and its symmetry destroyed by an horologiographical contrivance, as well as by a tasteless tablet placed above its plinth ; but, notwithstanding these drawbacks—viewed either in connection with its historical associations, or with the mysterious and exploded science of

which it is a relic—the column of Catherine de Medicis can scarcely be regarded with indifference. Within its deeply cut chamfering, now almost defaced by time, are still to be traced emblematic devices, similar to those heretofore mentioned, as adorning the walls of Ruggieri's laboratory. The elevation of the pillar from the ground is nearly a hundred feet, and its diameter somewhat more than nine feet.

When Crichton and the Gelosa disappeared through the recess, their course was for a few moments shaped along a low narrow passage, evidently contrived within the thickness of the wall, which, after a brief but toilsome ascent, conducted them to what appeared, from the increased height of the roof, and greater space between the walls, to be a sort of landing-place. Whether there was any further outlet from this spot, the profound darkness in which all was involved left them no means of ascertaining; but, as they tarried for an instant to recover breath, Crichton took advantage of the occasion warmly to express his thanks to his fair companion for the succour she had so opportunely afforded him.

"But for you," he said, "fair Ginevra, I had perished beneath the daggers of Catherine's assassins. To you I owe my life a second time—how—how shall I requite your devotion?"

"By suffering me to be your slave," cried the impassioned girl, bathing his hand with tears—"to remain ever near you."

"You shall never leave me," returned the Scot kindly, carrying his gratitude to a scarce allowable length; for, as he spoke, his lips sought the burning mouth of the Gelosa, while his arms pressed her closely to his bosom.

"Santa Madonna!" exclaimed Ginevra, hastily drawing back her head, deeply abashed at the impulse to which she had yielded, "our pursuers are at hand."

At the same moment, also, Crichton became aware of the sound of hoarse voices and approaching footsteps.

"There is—there must be—a further outlet; this chamber communicates with the queen's observatory," cried the Gelosa. "I remember I was dragged to some such place as this, by him who falsely calls himself my father, a few hours ago. Each wall in this frightful turret is perforated, like a state dungeon, with secret passages. Step forward, sweet signor, and you will find the outlet."

With outstretched hand, Crichton guided himself rapidly along the wall. The aperture was instantly discovered. His foot was on the flight of steps.

"Follow me, Ginevra," he cried, extending his hand in the direction of the damsel. But a grasp was laid upon her, from which she could not extricate herself. At the same moment a hissing laugh proclaimed her captor to be the vindictive dwarf. With supernatural force the mannikin twined himself round her person. The maiden felt herself sinking. His hot breath was upon her face—his horrible mouth approached her throat. She experienced a sharp and sudden thrill of pain. The vampire, having no other weapon, sought to fix his teeth in her neck. In this extremity, as she gave herself up for lost, Elberich's grasp relaxed, and the monster sank an inert mass to the earth. Crichton's poignard had freed her from her foe; while his arm bore her up the spiral stairs, just as Loupgarou and his crew reached the landing-place. The giant heard the struggle between Ginevra and Elberich—he heard also the fall of the latter, and, with a bound, sprang forward. He was too late to secure his prey, and, stumbling over the prostrate body of the dwarf, impeded with his huge person the further advance of his followers. Muttering deep execrations, he then arose, and began to ascend the column. After mounting some forty or fifty steps, a dull light, ad-

mitted through a narrow slit in the pillar, cheered his progress.

"By my fay," cried Loupgarou, as he gazed through this loop-hole upon the gardens of the Hôtel de Soissons, just visible by the uncertain light of a clouded moon, "we are within her majesty's observatory—those are the royal gardens—and yonder are the old towers of Saint Eustache."

"En verdad companero," replied Caravaja, thrusting forward his visage, and surveying in his turn the scene, "thou hast said it. It must be the structure I have so often gazed at from the Rue des Etuves, with the cage in which folks say Ruggieri keeps Señor Sathanas confined. Many a time have I seen that sooty imp, whose carcase we have left in the room below, practise a thousand fantastic trickeries upon those iron bars. There used to be a rope, from which he would fling himself headlong from the summit, and swing backwards and forwards, like an ape or a juggler, to the terror of all pious observers. Ha!—what means that clamour and clashing of swords? There are others at work beside ourselves. Vamos camarada?"

"Softly," replied the lethargic giant, pausing to take breath, "we do not need hurry ourselves, quo magis properare studeo, eo me impedio magis—as we say in the schools! We are certain our Scot is in this turret—we are certain, moreover, that he cannot descend without passing us—we are furthermore certain that we are four, and that he is but one; ergo, we may safely reckon upon his head—and upon our reward."

"Concedo consequentiam," returned Caravaja; "but proceed, most redoubted Goliath, or this puissant David may prove too much for thee, after all. Ha! hear you that shot? Some one has discovered him from below—mount!—despatch!"

Thus urged, Loupgarou recommenced the ascent. Another and another loop-hole showed him the eleva-

tion he had attained, and at length his mighty head came in contact with a plate of iron which proved to be a trap-door, opening upon the summit of the column, but which was now fastened on the other side. Here was an unexpected difficulty thrown in their path, not entirely, however, to the dissatisfaction of the giant, who, despite his bulk and sinew, like all other men of vast proportions, was of a somewhat craven nature at bottom, and regarded the approaching struggle with considerable misgiving. He deemed it necessary, however, to conceal his gratification under a mask of oath and bluster, and, seconding his words with a show of resolution, applied his shoulder to the trap-door with so much goodwill, that, to his astonishment, it at once yielded to his efforts. To recede was now impossible. Caravaja and his comrades were swearing in the rear; so, putting a bold face upon the matter, he warily emerged. What was his surprise, and we may say delight, to find the roof deserted! In proportion to his security, his choler increased.

"Hola!—my masters," he roared, "we are tricked, duped—deceived. This Crichton is in league with the fiend. He has made himself a pair of wings, and flown away with the girl upon his back. Cap-dé-diou! we are robbed of our reward."

"San diablo!" exclaimed Caravaja, as he also emerged from the trap-door. "Gone!—ha—higados!—I perceive the device."

To return to the Scot and his fair charge. Sustaining the terrified girl, who was so much exhausted as to be wholly unable to assist herself, within his arms, Crichton rapidly threaded the steps of the column. Arrived at the summit, he gently deposited Ginevra upon the roof, and stood, with his dagger in hand, prepared to strike down the first of his assailants who should appear at the mouth of the staircase. The cold

fresh air now playing upon her cheek, in some degree revived the Gelosa. She endeavoured to raise herself, but her strength was unequal to the effort. At this moment an outcry was heard below. It was the voice of Blount, calling to his dog. Crichton uttered an exclamation of delight. The packet had reached its destination—it would be delivered to Esclairmonde. Scarcely had this thought passed through his mind, when the sudden report of an arquebuss was heard—succeeded by a deep howl. Blount's shouts, mingled with those of Ogilvy, arose loud and stunning. The clash of swords succeeded. Crichton could no longer resist the impulse that prompted him to glance at the combatants. He leaned over the edge of the pillar, but all that he could discern was the Englishman engaged in sharp conflict with several armed figures, partially concealed from his view by the intervening shrubs of the garden. Druid was by his side, foaming, furious, and with his teeth fastened upon one of his master's assailants. The scarf was gone. But whether or not it was in Blount's possession, he was unable to ascertain. As he turned in doubt and some dejection towards the trap-door, his eye chanced upon a coil of rope attached to one of the links constituting the larger hemisphere of iron bars by which he was surrounded. A means of escape at once presented itself to his imagination. Swift as thought he tried the durability of the cord. It was of strength sufficient to sustain his weight, and of more than sufficient extent to enable him to reach the ground. He uttered an exclamation of joy; but he suddenly checked himself. The plan was relinquished as soon as formed. He could not abandon the Gelosa.

Ginevra divined his intentions. Collecting all her energies, she threw herself at his feet, beseeching him to avail himself of the opportunity that presented itself of safety by flight.

"And leave you here to fall into the hands of your pursuers—of Gonzaga? Never," replied Crichton.

"Heed me not—heed me not—noble and dear signor," replied the Gelosa. "I have my means of escape likewise—go—go—I implore of you. What is my life to yours! By the Virgin!" she continued, with passionate earnestness, "if you do not obey me, I will fling myself headlong from this pillar, and free you from restraint and myself from persecution."

So saying, she advanced to the brink of the column, as if resolved upon putting her threat into instant execution.

"Hold, hold, Ginevra," exclaimed Crichton, "we may both avoid our foes. Give me thy hand, rash girl." And ere she could advance another footstep, the Scot detained her with a powerful grasp. Ginevra sank unresistingly into his arms. Crichton's next proceeding was to make fast the trap-door, the bolt of which presented such feeble resistance to the Herculean shoulders of Loupgarou. He then threw the cord over the edge of the column, and advanced to the brink to see that it had fallen to the ground. As he did so, he was perceived and recognised by Ogilvy, who hailed him with a loud shout; but, as that doughty Scot was engaged hand to hand with a couple of assailants, he was not in a condition to render his patron any efficient assistance. Having ascertained that the cord had dropped in the way he thought desirable, Crichton again assured himself of the firmness of the knot, and placing his dagger between his teeth, to be ready for instant service on reaching the ground, and twining his left arm securely round the person of the Gelosa, whose supplications to be abandoned to her fate were unheeded, he grasped the rope tightly with his right hand, and leaning over the entablature of the column, pushed himself deliberately over its ledge.

For a moment the rope vibrated with the shock;

and as she found herself thus swinging to and fro in mid air, Ginevra could scarcely repress a scream. Her brain reeled as she gazed dizzily downwards and perceived the space intervening between her and the earth. Her head involuntarily sank over her shoulder, and she closed her eyes. Had her safety depended on her own powers of tenacity, she had certainly fallen.

The rope meanwhile continued its oscillations. With one arm only disengaged, and the other encumbered by his fair burden, it was almost impossible for Crichton to steady it. The architrave and frieze crowning the capital projected nearly two feet beyond the body of the shaft. For some time he could neither reach the sides of the pillar, so as to steady his course by its fluted channels, nor venture to trust himself to the guidance of the shifting cord. His peril appeared imminent. The strain upon the muscles was too great to be long endured. But Crichton's energies were inexhaustible, and his gripe continued unrelaxing. At length, after various ineffectual efforts, he succeeded in twining his legs securely round the rope, and was about to descend, when an incident occurred that rendered his situation yet more perilous.

Filled with astonishment at the daring attempt they witnessed, as Crichton launched himself from the column, the combatants beneath—friend and foe, as if by mutual consent—suspended hostilities. It was a feat of such hairbreadth risk, that all gave him up for lost. But, when he had made good his hold, their admiration knew no bounds. Blount loudly hurrahed, and threw his cap into the air. Even the adverse party uttered a murmur of applause. Ogilvy rushed forward to seize and secure the rope—and all had been well, but at the same moment he was grappled by one of his antagonists, and in the struggle that ensued, the cord was so violently shaken that Crichton had need of all his vigour to maintain his position. The rope

whirled round and round ; but contriving, amid the gyrations, to insert the point of his foot in the fluting of the pillar, he once more regained his equilibrium.

"Villain," cried Ogilvy, as he threw his enemy to the earth, and plunged his dirk within his bosom, "thou at least shalt reap the reward of thy treachery. Ah, what is this?" he cried, as from the folds of a scarf, which had dropped from the man's grasp, a packet of letters met his view. He was about to pick them up, when his attention was diverted by a loud cry from Blount.

"Ha! have a care, noble Crichton!" shouted the Englishman ; "have a care, I say! Saint Dunstan and Saint Thomas, and all other good saints protect thee! Desist, craven hound, what wouldst thou do? The curse of Saint Withold upon thee!" The latter part of Blount's ejaculation was addressed to Loupgarou, whose huge person might now be discovered leaning over the architrave of the pillar, and who was preparing to hew the rope asunder with his sword. "Oh, for a sling!" roared Blount, "to smite that accursed Philistine betwixt the temples!"

Directed by these outcries, and, at the same time, perceiving the effect of a blow upon the rope, Crichton looked upwards. He beheld the malignant and exulting aspect of Loupgarou, who, it is needless to say, through the agency of Caravaja, had discovered the mode of flight adopted by the Scot, and instantly resolved upon the only revenge in his power. It was evident, from his gestures and ferocious laughter, that the giant had resolved to exercise his utmost ingenuity in torturing his enemy. Before he attempted to sever the cord, he shook it with all his force, jerking it vehemently, first on the right hand, and then on the left ; but, finding he could not succeed in dislodging the tenacious Scot, he had recourse to another expedient. Taking firmly hold of the iron bar, by dint of great

exertion, he contrived to pull the cord up several feet. Uttering a loud yell, he let it suddenly drop. Still Crichton, though greatly shaken, maintained his hold. Loupgarou then proceeded slowly to saw the cord with his sword. Crichton gazed downward. He was still more than sixty feet from the ground.

"Ho, ho!" bellowed Loupgarou, "not so fast, fair sir—qui vult perire pereat—ho, ho! You shall reach the ground without further efforts of your own, and somewhat more expeditiously—sternitur exanimisque tremens procumbit humi—ho, ho!——"

"That fate shall be thy own, huge ox," screamed the shrill voice of Chicot in his rear. "Ho, ho!" laughed the jester, as the giant, whom he pushed forward with all his might, rolled heavily over the entablature; "not so fast, not so fast, my Titan."

"Quién adelante no mira, atrás se queda," exclaimed Caravaja, springing upon the jester with the intent of throwing him after the giant; "thou shalt reverse the proverb; look first, and leap after." The words were, however, scarcely out of his mouth, when he found himself seized by the Vicomte de Joyeuse, who suddenly appeared on the roof of the column.

Loupgarou made an effort to grasp at the architrave of the pillar as he was precipitated over it, and then at the rope, but he missed both. His great weight accelerated his fall. He descended head foremost. His skull came in contact with the sharp projecting edge of the plinth, which shattered it at once; and his huge frame lay without sense upon the pavement of the court, just as Crichton and his now senseless burden alighted in safety upon the ground.

"By my bauble!" cried Chicot, as he hailed Crichton from the summit of the column, "the great gymnastic feats of Gargantua equal not your achievements, compère."

But Crichton was too much occupied to attend to

the jester. He had now to defend himself against the assault of Gonzaga's followers, whose object was to possess themselves of the Gclosa.

At this moment the call of a trumpet sounded from the summit of the pillar, and the next instant some dozen men in arms, in the livery of the Vicomte de Joyeuse, made their appearance at its base.

"Down with your swords, in the king's name," cried the sergeant of the guard. "Chevalier Crichton, in the name of his most Catholic majesty, Henri Trois, you are our prisoner."

"Where is your leader?" demanded Crichton sternly; "to him alone will I yield myself."

"He is here, *mon cher*," cried Joyeuse, from the top of the pillar, "and rejoices to find you in safety. I will join you, and render all needful explanations. Meantime you must, perforce, continue my prisoner. Your adversary, Prince Vincenzo, hath yielded himself without demur."

"'Tis well," replied Crichton, throwing down his poignard.

It is needless to describe the rapturous congratulations of Ogilvy and Blount. The former appeared so anxious to relieve his patron from the burden of the fair singer, that he at length committed her to his care. The disciple of Knox gazed at her with admiration, and his bosom heaved with strange but inexpressible emotions, as he held the lovely player-girl in his arms.

"Ha!" exclaimed Crichton, turning hastily to Blount, "thy dog—hath he reached thee?"

"He is here," replied Blount, patting Druid. "He has been slightly hurt in this fray, poor fellow; the ball of an arquebuss hath grazed his side——"

"There was a scarf twined around him—thou hast it?" demanded Crichton.

"I saw nothing," answered Blount, staring in astonishment at the question.

"A scarf," ejaculated Ogilvy, "did it contain a packet?"

"It did," rejoined Crichton. "Have you seen it?"

"'Tis here," answered Ogilvy, springing forward, and once more committing the *Gelosa* to his patron. "Ha! here is the sash," he cried, "and a knot of ribands—but the packet is gone."

"Search," cried Crichton; "it may have escaped thy regards."

"It is nowhere to be found," replied Ogilvy, after a vain quest.

"Ah!" exclaimed Crichton, in a tone of anguish; "all my exertions then are fruitless. The prize is lost as soon as obtained."

BOOK THE THIRD

I

Hic Bibitur.

“Or, dist Pantagruel, faisons ung trançon de bonne chiere, et beuvons, je vous en prie, enfans—car il faict beau boire tout ce mois.”—RABELAIS: *Gargantua*, Liv. ii. chap. xxx.

ON the day succeeding the events previously related, and about two hours before noon, the interior of the Falcon in the Rue Pelican presented a scene of much bustle and animation. The tables were covered with viands; the benches with guests. The former consisting of every variety of refection, liquid and solid, proper to a substantial Parisian breakfast of the sixteenth century; from the well-soaked ham of Bayonne, and savoury sausage of Bologna, to the mild potage de levrier, and unctuous soupe de prime. The latter exhibiting every shade of character, from the roystering student (your scholars have always been great tavern-hunters) and sottish clerk of the Basoche, to the buff-jerkined musqueteer, and strapping sergeant of the Swiss guard.

The walls resounded with the mingled clatter of the trencher, the flagon, and the dice-box—with the shouts of laughter, and vociferations of the company, and with the rapid responses of the servitors. The air reeked with the fumes of tobacco, or, as it was then called, herbe à la reine, pimento, and garlic. Pots of hydromel, hippocras, and wine, served to allay thirst which the salt meats (*compulsoires de beuvettes*, according to

Rabelais) very naturally provoked, and many a deep draught was that morning drained to the health of Dame Fredegonde, the presiding divinity of the Falcon.

In saying that the wines of Dame Fredegonde were generally approved, we merely repeated the opinion of every member of the University of Paris, whose pockets were not utterly exhausted of the necessary métal ferruginé, and in averring that her charms were the universal theme of admiration, we reiterated the sentiments of every jolly lansquenet, or Gascon captain of D'Epernon's "Quarante Cinq," whose pike had at any time been deposited at her threshold, or whose spurs jingled upon her hearth.

Attracted by the report of her comeliness, half the drinking world of Paris flocked to the Falcon. It was the haunt of all lovers of good cheer and a buxom hostess.

Ah ! comme on entrain
Boire à son cabaret !

Some women there are who look old in their youth, and grow young again as they advance in life : and of these was Dame Fredegonde. At eighteen she did not appear so young, or so inviting, as at eight-and-thirty. Her person might be somewhat enlarged—what of that ? Many of her admirers thought her very embonpoint an improvement. Her sleek black tresses, gathered in a knot at the back of her head—her smooth brow, which set care and time, and their furrows, at defiance—her soft, dimpled chin—her dark, laughing eyes, and her teeth, white as a casket of pearls, left nothing to be desired. You could hardly distinguish between the ring of your silver real upon her board, and the laughter with which she received it. To sum up her perfections in a word—she was a widow. As Dame Fredegonde, notwithstanding her plumpness, had a very small waist, and particularly neat ankles, she wore an extremely tight bodice, and a particularly

short vertugadin ; and as she was more than suspected of favouring the persecuted Huguenot party, she endeavoured to remove the impression by wearing at her girdle a long rosary of beads terminated by the white double-cross of the League.

Among her guests, upon the morning in question, Dame Fredegonde numbered the Sorbonist, the Bernardin, the disciples of Harcourt and Montaigu, and one or two more of the brawling and disputatious fraternity, whose companionship we have for some time abandoned. These students were regaling themselves upon a Gargantuan gammon of ham, and a flask of Malvoisie. At some distance from this party sat Blount, together with his faithful attendant Druid, who, with his enormous paws placed upon his master's knees, and his nose familiarly thrust upon the board, received no small portion of the huge chine of beef destined for the Englishman's repast. Next to Blount appeared Ogilvy, and next to the Scot, but as far removed from his propinquity as the limits of the bench would permit, sat a youth whose features were concealed from view by a broad hat, and who seemed, from his general restlessness and impatience of manner, to be ill at ease in the society in which accident, rather than his own choice, had thrown him.

Passing over the remainder of the company, we shall come at once to a man-at-arms of a very prepossessing exterior, who had established himself in close juxtaposition with the buxom hostess. There was nothing very remarkable in the costume of this hero. A stout buff jerkin, a coarse brown serge cloak, a pointed felt hat with a single green feather, a long estoc, and buff boots with great spurs—this was the sum-total of it. But there was an ease and grace in his deportment, a fire in his eye, and a tone in his voice, that seemed scarcely to belong to the mere common soldier, whose garb he wore. His limbs were well proportioned—

his figure tall and manly—his complexion ruddy and sunburnt—his bearing easy and unrestrained, and his look that of one more accustomed to command than serve. He had immense moustaches, a pointed beard, a large nose slightly hooked, and eyes of a very amorous expression, and taken altogether, he had the air of a person born for conquest, whether of the fair sex or of kingdoms. His way of making love was of that hearty straightforward kind which carries all before it. Assured of success, he was, as a matter of course, assuredly successful. Dame Fredegonde found him perfectly irresistible. Her last lover, the strapping Swiss sergeant, who saw himself thus suddenly supplanted, was half frantic with jealousy, and twisting his fingers in his long black beard that descended to his belt, appeared to meditate with his falchion the destruction of his fortunate rival.

So far as splendour of accoutrements went, the Swiss had decidedly the advantage. No magpie was ever finer. His casaque, which gave additional width to his shoulders, already broad enough, was slashed with red and blue stripes, and girded with a broad red band, tied in a knot and hanging down in points. One of his stockings was red, the other white. A red garter crossed his knee. His barret cap had a projecting steel neb like that of a modern chasseur, with a tuft of scarlet dyed horsehair dangling behind. Around his throat he wore a huge ruff, down which his beard flowed like a dark river. His sword resembled a Moorish scimitar, while against the table by his side rested a halberd with a double-axe head. But neither his parti-coloured raiments, his beard, nor his gestures could draw from Dame Fredegonde a single smile of encouragement. She was completely monopolised by the invincible owner of the buff jerkin.

Meanwhile, the scholars had finished their Malvoisie, and were calling loudly for a fresh supply. “HOLA!

pulchra tabernaria—queen of the cellar!” shouted the Sorbonist, drumming on the table to attract Dame Fredegonde’s attention. “More wine here—Bordeaux, I say—*ex templo*! Leave off love-making for awhile—tear yourself from the arms of that jolly gendarme, if you can, like Helen from the embraces of Paris, *et nobis pronâ funde Falerna manû*. To the cellar, good dame—*sine Cerere et Baccho*—you know the rest; *et amphoram capacem fer cito*. Draw it neat and stint not: *respice personam, pone pro duo*; bus non est in usu, as the good Grandgousier saith. We are in a great hurry, and as thirsty as sand-beds Sang de Cabres! compaigns, our hostess is deaf. The combat we come to see will be over before we have done breakfast. *Hola!—hola!—ho!*”

“And we shall look as foolish as we did yesterday,” added the Bernardin, thumping upon the board with all his might, “when we found ourselves on the wrong side of the gate of the college of Navarre, during Crichton’s disputation. Body of Bacchus! I faint like a traveller in Arabia the Stony. Have compassion, *speciosissima Fredegonda*—your cups are as far apart as the trieteric orgies. The tourney was proclaimed by the heralds to take place at noon, and it is now nine o’ the clock. By the love you bear the Béjaunes of the university, use some despatch, or surrender to us the key of the cellar.”

“The scaffoldings are erected, and the barriers raised,” cried Harcourt. “I saw the carpenters and tapestry-makers at work; the whole façade of the Louvre, looking towards the gardens, blazes with silk and scutcheons. Cavaliers and pages are thronging thither in all directions. ’Twill be a glorious sight! I would not miss it for my bachelor’s gown.”

“Nor I,” replied Montaigu. “Mordieu! we shall see how Crichton comports himself to-day. It is one thing to war with words, and another with swords.

He may find the brave Prince of Mantua a better match for him than our sophisters."

"He has only to deal with Gonzaga as he dealt with some dozen of your classes yesterday," observed Ogilvy, in a scornful tone, "to ensure himself as cheap a victory as he then obtained."

"Ah!—are you there, *mon brave Ecossois*?" cried the Sorbonist—"I did not notice you before. But one has only to whisper the name of their patron saint, Crichton, and up starts a Scot, when one least expects such an apparition. However, I am glad to see you, *Sieur Ogilvy*—we have an account to settle together."

"The sooner we arrange it then, the better," cried Ogilvy, drawing his dagger, and springing across the bench. "I thought you and your rascal rout had met with your deserts at the scourge of the hangman of the *Petit Châtelet*; but I care not if your chastisement be reserved for my hands. Defend yourself, villain."

"Not till I have eaten my breakfast," replied the Sorbonist, with considerable phlegm. "As soon as I have finished my meal, I will assuredly do you the honour of cutting your throat. *Sede interim, quæso*. We are not now in the *Rue de Feurre*, or the *Pré-aux-Clercs*, but in the jurisdiction of the provost of Paris—and under the noses of the watch. I have no intention of baulking your humour, *Messire Ecossois*, but I have no fancy for exhibiting myself in the *Pilori des Halles* to please you."

"Dastard," cried Ogilvy, "will not a blow move you?" And he was about to deal the Sorbonist a buffet, when Dame *Fredegonde*, who had witnessed this altercation with some alarm, suddenly flung herself between the disputants.

"Holy Saint *Eloi*!" she cried, in a loud tone—"a brawl at this time, of the day—and in my reputable house too! I can scarcely credit my senses. Put up your swords instantly, *messires*, or I will summon the

watch, and give you all into its charge. Ah! you think I only threaten—you shall see. Maître Jacques," she added, addressing the Swiss sergeant, "this is your business. Let tranquillity be restored."

Maître Jacques, somewhat gratified to be at length called into notice by his inconstant mistress, stretched out his hand, and without altering his position, dragged Ogilvy towards him, and instantly disarmed him with as much ease apparently as a mother would have taken a stick from a child, or removed its sting from a wasp. Blount, who was a great admirer of feats of strength, could not refuse a murmur of approbation at the sergeant's singular exhibition of vigour.

"You shall have your sword again when you have recovered your temper," said Maître Jacques. "By my beard," he added, scowling at the scholars, "I will brain with my halberd the first of you who draws his sword."

Ogilvy regarded the athletic Swiss for an instant, with eyes glowing with indignation, and as if meditating a reprisal. But a gentle voice from the bench recalled him to his seat; and tranquillity was once more restored.

The soldier, who had watched the dispute and its issue with much nonchalance, now addressed Dame Fredegonde, as she returned to his vicinity.

"What tourney is this, ma mie," he said, "of which these brave scholars have just now spoken? You know I am only just arrived in Paris with the King of Navarre's envoy, and know nothing of court news. Who is this Crichton? What doth the Prince of Mantua, if I have heard yon student aright, in Paris? And above all, what are the grounds of quarrel between the combatants?"

"Do you expect me to answer all those inquiries in a breath, messire?" replied Dame Fredegonde, laughing. "You need not assure me you are a stranger in Paris, since you question me about the Seigneur Crichton. Who is he? He is handsome enough to be a prince.

But I believe he is only a Scottish gentleman. He is, however, the finest gentleman eyes were ever set upon. The Seigneurs Joyeuse, D'Epernon, and Saint-Luc, and others of his majesty's favourites, are not to be compared with him. He is as witty as he is handsome, and as wise as he is witty. Yesterday he had a great disputation with the heads of the university, and they have not had a word to say for themselves since. To-day he jousts with the Prince of Mantua in the gardens of the Louvre at noon, and I warrant me he will come off victorious. In short, he has but to speak and you are dumbfounded—to draw his sword, and his enemy drops at his feet—to look at a lady, and straight-way she falls into his arms."

"Of a verity, a most accomplished cavalier," said the soldier, with a smile; "but you have not yet told me the occasion of his difference with the young Prince of Mantua. What is their cause of quarrel, sweetheart? Tell me that."

"No one can tell to a certainty," replied Dame Fredegonde mysteriously; "but the challenge was given last night at the Louvre. Some say it is about an Italian mistress—(here the youth near Ogilvy was observed to start)—some that the Seigneur Crichton has discovered a plot against the king's life, in which Cosmo Ruggieri, and a great lady—whom nobody dares to name—together with this prince are concerned, and that in consequence the Prince of Mantua, Vincenzo, who has been for some time at the court in disguise, has defied him to mortal combat. Certes, there were strange doings at the Hôtel de Soissons last night, as the Chevalier du Guet informed me when he made his rounds. But that's no business of mine. They do say, also, that the Seigneur Crichton's life was twice endangered—first at the banquet by the jealousy of another great lady who is in love with him, and who poured a dose of poison into his wine."

"What great lady do you mean, ma mie? Surely not the queen-mother!"

"Holy Virgin! no," cried Fredegonde, with a scream of laughter; "the Seigneur Crichton is hardly likely to be in love with her."

"Who, then?"

"You are very inquisitive, messire. How can it concern you to know in what way queens and other great dames revenge themselves on their lovers' infidelities?"

"Ventre-saint-gris! It may concern me more nearly than you imagine. You know I am from the court at Pau—from Henri of Navarre. You do not mean his queen?"

"I do not mean the Queen Louise, and you may, therefore, form a shrewd guess whom I do mean," replied Dame Fredegonde significantly. "There, you will have a pretty piece of scandal to take back to your monarch. And, as I live, he could not look more blank than you do at the intelligence—ha—ha—ha!"

"Peste!" exclaimed the soldier, biting his lip. "And it is for this adventurer that Marguerite refuses to leave her brother's court, and to rejoin her husband?"

"To be sure!—she would find your psalm-singing Béarnais rather dull after the gay galliard Crichton. But you look serious, messire!"

"Your sex is enough to make one so," replied the soldier, forcing a laugh.

"Femmes sont secretes
En amour discretes
Douces mygnonnettes
Et tant bien parlantes,
Mal sont profitables,
Et fort variables
Y sont tous les diables.

Our good Henri will care no more about the matter than I do. And hark!—those scholars are still

clamorous for wine. Allow me to attend you to the cellar! You will want some help to carry that mighty flagon."

To return to Ogilvy and his companions. Blount continued sedulous in his attentions to the chine; but the Scot's appetite was gone. He swallowed a deep draught of wine, and began to hack the table with a knife. To a casual remark, addressed to him by the Englishman, he returned a sullen response. It was evident he was deeply offended. But Blount did not take his petulance in umbrage, but continued his repast in silence, ever and anon bestowing a morsel of fat upon his dog. The Gelosa now drew nearer to the wrathful Scot, and laid her hand gently upon his arm. Ogilvy turned his inflamed cheek towards her. "What would you?" he asked.

"I would quit this place," said Ginevra; "a presentiment of misfortune, which I cannot shake off, oppresses me. The clamour distracts me, and I am fearful those reckless scholars may recognise me. Besides," she added, with somewhat of reproach in her accent, "you but ill fulfil your patron's injunctions—you were to protect me—not to endanger my safety by provoking hostilities."

"Pardon my rashness, fair maiden," replied Ogilvy, with some confusion. "I was wrong in giving way to this foolish display of passion; but, where the honour of Crichton is concerned, my feelings are irrepressible."

"I honour you for your devotion," returned the Gelosa; "and let not any thought of risk to me deter you from its manifestation. Conduct me hence, and return, if you see fitting, to avenge yourself upon yon insolent scholar."

"Impossible!" replied Ogilvy; "the escort from the Vicomte de Joyeuse, which is to conduct you beyond the gates of Paris, and place you on the route to

the frontiers of Italy, is not yet arrived. We must await its coming. It was the Chevalier Crichton's desire that we should do so. Fear nothing, fair maiden. I will defend you with the last drop of my blood; nor shall you again have to reproach my intemperate zeal in my patron's behalf."

"My heart misgives me," replied Ginevra; "but since it was his wish, I will remain here. I feel as if I were not yet out of the power of that terrible Gonzaga. And then," she added timidly, and blushing deeply as she spoke, "shall I confess to you, signor, that I would willingly hazard my safety by remaining in Paris—nay, within the precincts of the Louvre, to witness this tourney. If Vincenzo fall, I have nothing to fear."

"But from Ruggieri—from Catherine you may still apprehend peril," returned Ogilvie; "besides, know you not that the king has commanded a combat à plaisance and not à outrance? The prince may be worsted, therefore—but not slain. Your danger will not be diminished by the result of this conflict."

A burst of noisy merriment from the scholars here broke upon them, and the following irreverent Bacchanalian lay was chanted at the top of his voice by the Sorbonist; the other students joining in chorus.

VENITE POTESUS.¹

I.

Venite, jovial sons of Hesper,
Who from matin unto vesper,
Roam abroad sub Domino;
Benedictine, Carmelite,
Quaff we many a flask to-night
Salutari nostro

¹ Adapted from an old French Inatatoyre Bachique.

If the wine be, as I think,
 Fit for reverend lips to drink
 Jubilemus ei,
 Ecce bonum vinum, venite potemus

II.

Hodie, when cups are full,
 Not a thought or care should dull
 Corda vestra—
 Eat your fill—the goblet quaff,
 Sufficient is the wine thereof
 Secundum diem—
 What care I—if huge in size
 My paunch should wax?—it testifies
 Opera mea.
 Venite potemus!

III.

Quadraginta years and more
 I've seen; and jolly souls some score
 Proximus fui;
 And life throughout, have ever thought,
 That they, who tippie ale that's naught,
 Errant corde:
 Yea, in my choler waxing hot,
 I swear sour bear should enter not
 In requiem meam.
 Ecce bonum vinum, venite potemus!

The reappearance of Dame Fredegonde and the soldier bearing a capacious stoup of claret had given rise to this effusion of the Sorbonist; and as each goblet was now filled to the brim, after having been previously emptied, general hilarity prevailed among the thirsty scions of the university. The Bernardin insisted upon the soldier taking a seat beside him and the Sorbonist deemed it incumbent upon him to present a flagon of the ruby fluid to Maître Jacques, who drained it in a breath.

“Lans tringue!” cried the scholar of Harcourt, slapping the soldier on the shoulder, “I drink to thee. Thou hast given us good measure and good wine,

i'faith. May our buxom hostess never want such a cellarist—nor ourselves such a drawer—ha—ha !

Remplis ton verre vuide
Vuide ton verri plein."

"I will not refuse thy pledge, comrade," replied the soldier, "though my brain will not brook many such strong assaults so early in the morning. Here is to thy election to the dignity of chaplain at the next Fête de Fous."

"Jest not with me, compaing, but drink," retorted Harcourt angrily; "it were thy safer course. Ah! thou refusest. I discern something of the Huguenot about thee. I heard thee tell our hostess just now thou wert from the headquarters of the Béarnais. One might guess as much from thy neglect of the flask, and devotion to the petticoats—*dignum patella operculum*. Ah! if it were ever to occur that thy master should be King of France, a pretty time we should have of it! The good old days of François the First would be revived with a vengeance. Not a husband in Paris could rest in his bed. The saints defend us from such a consummation! Well, I bear him no ill-will—here's to Alcandre."

"Maranatha!" exclaimed the Sorbonist, "that must not pass. We will be Catholic even in our cups. Thy pledge is heretical and schismatic. Rather let us drink confusion to the Béarnais, the Reform, and the Church of Geneva; and success to the League, the true Church, and the brave Balafré!"

"To the Holy Union!" cried the Bernardin.

"To the Pope!" shouted Montaignu.

"To Beelzebub!" roared Harcourt. "I will hurl my wine-cup in his face who refuses my pledge—Henri of Navarre, and the Huguenot cause!"

"By the Mass, I scent heresy in thy pledge, and refuse it," returned the Sorbonist. The words were

scarcely out of his mouth when he received the contents of the scholar of Harcourt's flagon in his face.

In an instant all was confusion. Swords were drawn and crossed, and the table nearly upset in the confusion that ensued ; but, by the united efforts of Blount, who had now formed one of the party, and the Swiss sergeant, the combatants were separated, and tranquillity for the second time restored. The cause of the disturbance, meantime, our nonchalant soldier, so far from taking any share in the struggle, leaned back in his chair, and indulged in an immoderate fit of laughter.

"How now, thou insensible varlet !" cried Harcourt, whose furious countenance and ruffled demeanour presented a singular contrast to his companion's apathy ; "hast thou never a sword to draw in thy sovereign's behalf, or grace enough to thank him who is ready to fight thy battles for thee ? By my soul, I was wrong. Brother of the Sorbonne, thy hand. Thou wert in the right to object to my rascal pledge. *Ventre-saint Quintin* ! from a Huguenot one gets neither aid nor acknowledgment."

"The quarrel was of thine own seeking, comrade," returned the soldier, with increased merriment. "I pressed thee not into my service—the good cause of the Reformed Faith needs no such blustering advocate as thou ; and the Béarnais will not laugh a whit the less loudly because one sot drinks to his success, and another to his confusion."

"Fairly spoken," cried Montaigu. "For a Huguenot our reformado hath the air of an honest fellow. A truce to raillery, comrades ! *Favete linguis*. These brawls interfere with drinking. Let us have a song to restore us to harmony. *Chantons, beuvons ung motet*, as glorious old Rabelais hath it."

"Entonnons," cried the others, laughing.

"What shall it be ?" asked the soldier.

“ *Le chanson de la Peronelle,
La vie de Monsieur Saint François,
La Confiteor des Angloys,*

or the merry burden of some farce, sotie, or joyous discourse?”

“ *La Réformeresse*, for instance,” retorted Montaigu, vociferating at the top of his voice—

“ To Paris, that good city,
Navarre’s young king is come,
And flock forth the damsels pretty,
At the beating of his drum.
But the fairest ’mid the crowd, sirs,
The loveliest of the lot,
Is a nymph, who cries aloud, sirs,
To the church, sire, you go not,
Huguenot.”

“ E’en give us what thou wilt, my puissant Hector ; so thy strains savour not of the nasal melodies of Théodore Beza, or the canticles of Clément Marot, they will be right welcome.”

“ Lend me your voices in full chorus, then,” replied the soldier, “and respond to my litany.” And, in a deep tone, he sang as follows :—

“ From all men, who, counsel scorning,
To the tavern hie at morning,
With Latin base their talk adorning,
Libera nos Domine.
From all those, who night and day,
Cards and raiment cast away,
At cards and dice and other play,
Libera nos Domine.”

“ *Satis superque*,” shouted Montaigu, “thy rogation toucheth me too nearly, as testifieth the tattered state of my exponibles, to be altogether satisfactory—hei mihi !

Alea vina, Venus, tribus his sum factus egenus.

Sed parum est. I have still a few liards left, and when my pouch is utterly evacuate, I can turn Huguenot,

or hang myself—it matters little which. In the meantime,” and here the reckless youth once more broke into song:—

SONG OF THE SCHOLAR.¹

I.

A jolly life enough I lead—that is *semper quam possum* ;
When mine host inviteth me, I answer *ecce assum* !
Women, wine, and wassailry *lubens libenter colo*,
And after meals to pass the time *chartis ludisque volo*,
Unluckily these games are not *omnino sine dolo*.

II.

Wine to tippie I conceive *quod fui generatus*,
Treasure to amass, indeed, I doubt if I was *natus*,
Never yet with coin enough, was I *locupletatus*,
Or, with a superfluity, *vehementer excitatus*—
Despice *divitias si vis animo esse beatus*.

III.

Whither are my raiments fled ? *amice mi ?—si quæris* ?
Quaffed they were in flowing cups in *tempore (heu !) veris* ;
Thus am I obliged to roam *subhorridas per vicos*,
Herding amidst truand rogues *et alios iniquos* :
Cum fueris felix multos numerabis amicos !

“Bellissime !” cried the soldier, “thy case is a hard one, I must needs admit, comrade. But thou art a likely lad, and I promise thee, if thou wilt accompany me to the King of Navarre’s camp, whither I set out this morning, and wilt forswear thy roystering habits, and embrace the true doctrine, I will put thee in a way of lining thy pouch with weightier pieces than any it now holds, and of replacing thy threadbare apparel with the hacquetoon and habergeon of the Bourbon.”

“Weighty blows are said to abound more than weighty pieces in thy king’s psalm-singing camp,”

¹ An adaptation of a few verses of a Macaronic poem of little merit, entitled, “*Des fames, des dez, et de la taverne*,” appended to the last edition of the “*Fabliaux et Contes des Poètes François*.”

returned Montaigu ; “and I must be bribed by present payment if I vend my soul to Messire Sathanas. But come,” he added, filling his goblet, “let us drink between our songs, and sing between our draughts. *Ædipol* ! my jolly missionary ad partes infidelium, thou hast the throat of a nightingale, and warblest a song divinely ; and as thou art chary of the flask, wilt have the more leisure to divert us with another stave.”

“*Ventre-saint-gris*,” muttered the soldier, smiling, to himself ; “could my faithful Rosni have foreseen that, during his absence, I should play the lover to a buxom aubergiste, the buffoon to a pack of losel scholars, and the rebel to myself, I had not escaped a lecture as long as ever John Calvin pronounced from his pulpit at Geneva. No matter : the monotony of life must be relieved ; and he is a wise man who makes the most of the passing moment.”

With this philosophical reflection, he yielded to the scholar’s importunities. It has been observed before, that his countenance was remarkable for its frankness and cordiality. It had, besides, an indescribable expression of comic humour, which broadened and brightened, as he proceeded with his vocal performance, into a glow of such irresistible drollery, that his auditors were almost convulsed with laughter ; and, as real mirth is always contagious, the infection was speedily communicated to every guest of the Falcon, the pensive and dolorous Ogilvy not excepted.

THE CHRONICLE OF GARGANTUA :

SHOWING HOW HE TOOK AWAY THE GREAT BELLS OF
NOTRE-DAME.

I.

Grandgousier was a toper boon, as Rabelais will tell ye,
Who, once upon a time, got drunk with his old wife
Gargamelly :

Right royally the bout began (no queen was more punctilious
Than Gargamelle) on chitterlings, botargus, godebillios!¹

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

II.

They licked their lips, they cut their quips—a flask then each
selected ;

And with good Greek, as satin sleek, their gullets they
humected.

Rang stave and jest, the flask they pressed—but ere away
the wine went,

Occurred most unexpectedly Queen Gargamelle's confine-
ment !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

III.

No sooner was GARGANTUA born, than from his infant
throttle

Arose a most melodious cry to his nurse to bring the bottle !
Whereat Grandgousier much rejoiced—as it seemed, unto his
thinking,

A certain sign of humour fine for most immoderate drinking !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

IV.

Gargantua shot up, like a tower some city looking over !

His full-moon visage in the clouds, leagues off, ye might
discover !

His gracious person he arrayed—I do not mean to laugh at
ye—

With a suit of clothes, and great trunk hose, of a thousand
ells of taffety.

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

V.

Around his waist Gargantua braced a belt of silk bespangled,
And from his hat, as a platter flat, a long blue feather
dangled ;

¹ Gaudebillaux sont grasses trippes de coiraux. Coiraux sont
bœufz engresses à la criche, et prés guimaulx. Prés guimaulx sont
qui portent herbe deux foyz l'an.

And down his hip, like the mast of ship, a rapier huge
descended,
With a dagger keen, struck his sash between, all for
ornament intended.

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

VI.

So learned did Gargantua grow, that he talked like one
whose turn is

For logic, with a sophister, hight Tubal Holofernes.

In Latin, too, he lessons took from a tutor old and seedy,
Who taught the "Quid Est," and the "Pars"—one Jobelin
de Bridé !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

VII.

A monstrous mare Gargantua rode—a black Numidian
courser—

A beast so droll, of filly or foal, was never seen before, sir !
Great elephants looked small as ants by her side—her hoofs
were cloven !

Her tail was like the spire at Langes—her mane like goat-
beards woven !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

VIII.

Upon this mare Gargantua rode until he came to Paris,
Which, from Utopia's capital, as we all know, rather far is—
The thundering bells of Notre-Dame he took from out the
steeple,

And he hung them round his great mare's neck in the sight
of all the people !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

IX.

Now, what Gargantua did beside, I shall pass by without
notice,

As well as the absurd harangue of that wiseacre Janotus ;
But the legend tells that the thundering bells Bragmardo
brought away, sir,

And that in the towers of Notre-Dame they are swinging to
this day, sir !

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golynoly, golynolo !

X.

Now the great deeds of Gargantua—how his father's foes he followed—

How pilgrims six, with their staves and scrips, in a lettuce-leaf he swallowed—

How he got blind drunk with a worthy monk, Friar Johnny of the Funnels—

And made huge cheer, till the wine and beer flew about his camp in runnels—

Sing Carimari, carimara ! golyndy, golyndy !

XI.

How he took to wife, to cheer his life, fat Badebec the moper ;

And by her begat a lusty brat, Pantagruel the toper !

And did other things, as the story sings, too long to find a place here,

Are they not writ, with matchless wit, by Alcofrabas Nasier ? ¹

Sing, Carimari, carimara ! golyndy, golyndy !

As the soldier brought his song to a close, amid the thundering applause and inextinguishable laughter of the scholars, his own exhilaration was considerably damped by the sudden appearance of two new-comers, who had entered the cabaret, unobserved, during his performance ; and with looks sufficiently expressive of their disapprobation of his conduct, held themselves aloof until the termination of his strains, when they slowly approached the table.

The foremost of these personages was a man of middle age and severe aspect, fully equipped in the accoutrements of a military leader of the period ; but his breastplate, though of the brightest Milan steel, was wholly destitute of ornament, and resembled rather, in its heavy and cumbrous form, an antique cuirass, of the age of Bayard and Gaston de Foix, than the lacquered and embossed armour worn by the knight-

¹ The anagram of François Rabelais.

hood of the court of France. A tall plume nodded upon his morion, and a long two-handed sword, called in the language of the tilt-yard a *gagne-pain*, was girded to his thigh. The hand able to wield such a blade with ease could not, it was evident, be deficient in energy. From his right hip hung the long and trenchant dagger, termed, from its use in combat, a *miséricorde*. His companion was habited in the black Geneva cloak and band constituting the attire of a preacher of the Reformed Faith. He was a venerable man, with silver hair streaming upon his shoulders from beneath his black silk calotte. His figure was bent by age and infirmities, and his steps needed the support of a staff; but the fire which yet blazed in his deep-seated grey eye, showed that the ardour and enthusiasm of his youthful spirit was still unextinguished.

"Diable!" mentally exclaimed the soldier, pushing aside his seat and rising to greet the strangers, "Rosni here—and my old preceptor Doctor Florent Chrétien. Parbleu! their arrival at this juncture is unlucky. But I must put the best face I can upon the matter." And, as these thoughts passed rapidly through his mind, he reverently saluted the minister, and exchanging a significant look with the knight, the party adjourned to a more retired part of the cabaret.

"I did not expect to find your majesty thus occupied," observed Rosni, in a tone of reproach, as soon as they were out of hearing of the company. "Methinks the wise and valiant Henri of Navarre might have more profitably as well as worthily employed his leisure, than by administering to the amusements and sharing in the pastimes of these unlicensed and idolatrous brawlers."

"Tush, Rosni," replied Henri of Bourbon, "I am not a monarch with these revellers; and were I to vouch any explanation to thee, with whom I am a

king, I could offer such reasons for my conduct as would convince thee, that what I have done has been without impeachment of my 'valour and wisdom,' and was merely undertaken to sustain my character as a soldier."

"Your character as a soldier would have been better sustained by repressing license than abetting it, sire," returned Rosni bluntly. "Had I been in your majesty's place, and these riotous Edomites had pressed me to make music for them, I would have treated them to a psalm, such as our pious Calvin hath himself appointed for the recreation of the faithful, or to one of those mournful ballads so displeasing to the enemies of our religion, wherein their own sanguinary atrocities are sternly set forth, and the sufferings of our martyrs painfully recorded."

"And have been laughed at for thy pains," said Henri. "Trust me, my expedient was the wiser one."

At this moment the voices of the scholars again rose loud in song; and the following chorus reached the ears of the King of Navarre and his companions:—

A merry company are we,
Who spend our lives in revelry,
Self-nicknamed *Enfans-sans-souci* !
Cric croc, cric, croc, la, la !

"*Ohé*, soldier of the true faith," shouted Montaigu, "another song before we start for the tourney! Heed not thy captain's reprimand. We will bear thee harmless."

"Thou hearest," said Henri, smiling; "those *Enfans-sans-souci*, as they not inaptly term themselves, are clamorous for my return. *Ventre-saint-gris*! Rosni, I am half-disposed to send thee to them as my substitute. I would gladly see what effect one of thy doleful ditties would have upon their high-flown spirits. Wilt take my seat at yon table?"

"I will obey your majesty's behests," replied Rosni gravely—"but I wash my hands of the consequences."

"Go, then," replied Henri, laughing, "thou deservest some punishment for thy imprudence. What in the devil's name induced thee to bring old Chrétien to this 'meeting of the mockers,' and 'seat of the scornful,' as he would call it? Thy former experience might have led thee to expect some such untoward accident as the present; and it should be rather thy business to draw a veil over thy sovereign's foibles than to betray them."

"I shall observe more caution in the future," returned Rosni, in a tone of irony; "but, after his own voluntary promise of amendment, it ill became me to doubt my sovereign's maintenance of his word. Doctor Florent Chrétien, whom I chanced upon at the Protestant consistory in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, this morning, hath a matter of importance to communicate to your majesty's private ear, and to that end I ventured to bring him hither."

"Thou hast done well, Rosni," replied the king; "nevertheless, I cannot pretermitt the punishment I have imposed on thee. Hark! my comrades call thee—go and join them."

Again the chorus of the scholars arose above the general clamour; and the Sorbonist was heard vociferating the following verses:—

SONG OF THE SORBONIST.

Death to the Huguenot; fagot and flame!
 Death to the Huguenot! torture and shame!
 Death! Death!

Heretics' lips sue for mercy in vain,
 Drown their loud cries in the waters of Seine!
 Drown! Drown!

Hew down, consume them with fire and with sword !
A good work ye do in the sight of the Lord !

Kill ! Kill !

Hurl down their temples ! their ministers slay !
Let them bleed as they bled on Barthélemy's day !
Slay ! Slay !

A roar of insolent laughter followed this effusion. Henri of Navarre bit his lips.

"Go," he said, frowning, "leave me with Chrétien."

"By the holy evangel ! I will make these accursed massmongers such sport as Samson showed the Philistines," returned Rosni. "But before I quit your presence, sire, I must acquaint you that your escort is in readiness at the Porte Montmartre, and that two of my followers with your steed await your coming forth at the door of this cabaret."

"Let them wait," answered the king sharply. "I shall not set out upon my journey till the evening."

"How, sire ?" asked Rosni.

"It is my intention to attend the jousts held this morning at the Louvre."

"But your majesty——"

"Is resolved to have my own way—so thou mayest spare me further remonstrances on that head, Rosni. Not only will I witness this tourney, but break a lance at it myself in honour of the queen my spouse ; though I freely confess she deserves no such attention at my hands, after her refusal to join me where she deems I now am, at my court of Pau. But let that pass. There is a Scottish cavalier who has boasted, as it seems to me, somewhat indiscreetly, of Marguerite's favours towards him, whether truly or not signifies little, as I hold secrecy to be the first duty of a gallant. I have a fancy for lowering this prattling mignon's crest, the rather that he is reputed an expert tilter, and as such not unworthy of my lance. And it may chance, if Marguerite sees her favourite laid low, she may change

her mind as to returning with me. At all events, I shall attend this tourney in the quality of a knight-adventurer. Thou shalt ride forth with me anon, and procure me suitable equipments. My own steed will bear me bravely through the day."

"Your majesty shall commit no such folly," replied Rosni bluntly.

"Baron de Rosni," exclaimed Henri haughtily, "we have honoured thee thus far with our friendship—but there are limits to our good-nature which even you shall not exceed."

"Pardon my bluntness, sire," returned Rosni; "but, at the hazard of forfeiting your favour, I would step between you and the peril to which you expose yourself thus rashly. When your faithful counsellors reluctantly consented to your coming hither on this fruitless embassy to a queen who loves you not, but who partakes of the perfidious and inconstant nature of her family—when, I say, they consented to your accompanying your own messengers in disguise, my life was pledged for your safe return. That life is nothing. But upon your security, sire, hangs the fate of a kingdom, and the prosperity of a pure and holy faith of which you are the defender and champion. Bethink you of the cause in which you have embarked—of your zealous followers—of the whole Protestant world, whose eyes are fixed upon you; bethink you also of the risk you run—of the inevitable consequences attendant upon a discovery of your presence—of your long captivity in the walls of the Louvre, from which you have so recently escaped. Think of all this, and blame (if you can) the zeal which prompts me to speak thus boldly."

"Leave me, sir," replied Henri. "I would speak with my old preceptor. You shall know my determination anon."

Rosni bowed, and took the place assigned to him by the monarch at the table of the revellers. His arrival

was greeted with loud laughter, and many muttered allusions from the reckless crew to his Huguenot principles.

"Hark ye, messires," said Rosni, "you have prevailed upon one of my troop to sing for you, and in return you have favoured us with one of those ferocious melodies which your brethren howled to the thundering tocsin of the bloody day of Saint Barthélemy. Ye shall now have my response. But first I charge ye, let your goblets be filled to the brim, and drink the pledge I shall propose to you—'The downfall of Antichrist, the extermination of the League, and the universal establishment of the True Faith.' Ha! you hesitate. By the evangel! messires, I will thrust my poignard into his throat who refuses my pledge." So saying, he drew his dagger and glanced fiercely round the group.

A stern silence succeeded this speech. The mirth of the scholars was suddenly checked. Each one glanced at his neighbour, as if he expected he would resent the insult. But no one dared to do so openly.

"I am with you, Sir Knight," exclaimed Blount. "I will see that all obey you."

"The pledge!" said Rosni, seizing the scholar of Harcourt by the throat, and forcing him to pronounce the hateful words, and afterwards to wash them down with a deep draught of wine.

"By Saint Thomas, thou escapest not," cried Blount, grappling with the Sorbonist.

"Not one shall escape me," said Rosni—"he shall drink it, or die the death."

Accordingly, seeing resistance was in vain against armed force like that of the knight, the scholars sullenly complied.

"I have not yet done with you, messires," said Rosni, in a tone of mockery. "I will not insult the religion I profess, by allowing blasphemers, like yourselves, to

take part in its holy psalms ; but as you have rung in my ears the death-knell of our slaughtered saints, ye shall listen to the judgment called down from on high for that offence upon the head of the late treacherous and bloodthirsty sovereign, Charles the Ninth. Stir not, neither offer any interruption, as ye would avoid a sudden and speedy doom."

"Lend me your dagger, Sir Knight," said Ogilvy, unable to control his choler, and springing towards the table ; "and I will compel as attentive audience to your strains as ever was accorded to the sermons of our pious Knox."

"And as willing," said the Bernardin, with a sneer.

"Take that in earnest of the chastisement I will inflict upon him who shall disobey the knight's commands," said Ogilvy, bestowing a sounding buffet upon the scholar's cheek ; adding fiercely, as he received the *miséricorde* from Rosni, "the first of you who speaketh a word of offence breathes his last."

Amid the glances of defiance and suppressed rage cast upon him by the scholars, the knight, in a deep, stern tone, sang the following ballad :—

CHARLES IX. AT MONTFAUCON.

I.

"To horse—to horse !" thus spake King Charles, "to horse, my lords, with me,
Unto Montfaucon will we ride—a sight you there shall see."
"Montfaucon, sire !" said his esquire—"what sight, my liege, how mean ye ?"
"The carcase stark of the traitor dark, and heretic Coligni."

II.

The trumpets bray, their chargers neigh a loud and glad
réveillé—
And plaudits ring, as the haughty king from the Louvre
issues gaily ;

On his right hand rides his mother, with her dames—a
gorgeous train—

On his left careers his brother, with the proud Duke of
Lorraine.

III.

Behind is seen his youthful queen—the meek Elizabeth¹—
With her damsels bright, whose talk is light of the sad, sad
show of death ;

Ah, lovely ones ! ah, gentle ones ! from the scoffer's judgment
screen ye !—

Mock not the dust of the martyr'd just, for of such was good
Coligni.

IV.

By foot uphung, to flesh-hook strung, is now revealed to
all,

Mouldering and shrunk, the headless trunk of the good old
admiral :

Gash-visaged Guise the sight doth please—fierce lord, was
naught between ye ?

In felon blow of base Poltrot² no share had brave Coligni.

V.

“ Now, by God's death ! ” the monarch saith, with inauspi-
cious smile,

As laughing, group the reckless troop round grey Mont-
faucon's pile ;

¹ Elizabeth of Austria, daughter of the Emperor Maximilian, an amiable and excellent princess, whose genuine piety presented a striking contrast to the sanguinary fanaticism of her tyrannical and neglectful spouse. “ O mon Dieu ! ” she cried, on the day of the massacre, of which she had been kept in ignorance ; “ *quels conseillers sont ceux-là, qui ont donné la roi tel avis ? Mon Dieu ! je te supplie, et je requiers de lui pardonner, car si tu n'en as pitié j'ai grand peur que cette offense ne lui soit pas pardonnée.* ”

² Jean Poltrot de Méré, the assassin of François de Guise, father of the Balafre, probably, in order to screen himself, accused Coligni and Beza of being the instigators of his offence. His flesh was afterwards torn from his bones by red-hot pincers, but Henri of Lorraine never considered his father's death fully avenged until the massacre of the admiral. Coligni's head was sent by Catherine de Medicis to Rome as an offering to Gregory the Thirteenth. Upon this occasion the Pope had a medal struck off, stamped with an exterminating angel, and subscribed, “ *Ugonotorum Strages.* ”

"From off that hook its founder shook—Enguerrand de Marigni¹—
But gibbet chain did ne'er sustain such burden as Coligni."

VI.

"Back! back! my liege," exclaimed a page, "with death the air is tainted,
The sun grows hot, and see you not, good sire, the queen has fainted!"

"Let those retire," quoth Charles in ire, "who think they stand too nigh;
To us no scent yields such content as a dead enemy."²

VII.

As thus he spake, the king did quake—he heard a dismal moan—
A wounded wretch had crept to stretch his bones beneath that stone;
"Of dying man," groaned he, "the ban, the Lord's anointed dread,
My curse shall cling to thee, O king!—much righteous blood thou'st shed."

VIII.

"Now, by Christ's blood! by holy Rood!" cried Charles impatiently;
"With sword and pike—strike, liegemen, strike!—God's death! this man shall die."
Straight halberd crash'd, and matchlock flashed—but ere a shot was fired,
With laugh of scorn that wight forlorn had suddenly expired.

¹ Pereat suâ arte Perillus. Enguerrand de Marigni, grand chamberlain of France during the reign of Philippe-le-Bel, constructed the famous gibbet of Montfaucon, and was himself among the first to glut its horrible fourches patibulaires, whence originated the ancient adage—Plus malheureux que le bois dont on fait le gibet.

² Ensuite Coligni fut traîné aux fourches patibulaires de Montfaucon. Le Roi vint jouir de ce spectacle, et s'en montra insatiable. On ne concevait pas qu'il pût résister à une telle odeur; on le pressait de se retirer. Non dit-il, le cadavre d'un ennemi sent toujours bon!—LACRATELLE.

IX.

From the Louvre gate, with heart elate, King Charles that
 morn did ride ;
 With aspect dorn did he return, quenched was his glance of
 pride !
 Remorse and ruth, with serpent tooth, thenceforth seized on
 his breast—
 With bloody tide his couch was dyed—pale visions broke his
 rest !¹

As the Baron de Rosni concluded his song, a sullen murmur arose amongst the scholars, deepening as it proceeded, until it took the character of an angry groan.

“Par la Porte d’Enfer, which once conducted the neophyte to our halls,” muttered Harcourt, “I would as soon die with the Confession of Augsburg upon my lips, as listen to such another ditty. Coligni’s own epitaph would make a sprightlier lay :—

Cy gist, mais c’est mal entendu,
 Ce mot pour luy est trop honneste,
 Icy l’Admiral est pendu
 Par les pieds à faute de teste !”

“Pas les pieds à faute de tête !” chorussed the others, with a roar of derisive laughter.

“Peace, on your lives,” cried Ogilvy, with a threatening gesture.

“By the memory of the good Thomas Crucé, who slaughtered eighty of these schismatics with his proper hand,” whispered the Sorbonist to the scholar of Harcourt, “I will wash out the affront put upon

¹ La maladie de Charles IX. était accompagnée de symptômes plus violens qu’on n’en remarque dans les maladies de langueur ; sa poitrine était particulièrement affectée ; mais son sang coulait par tous les pores ; d’affreux souvenirs persécutaient sa pensée dans un lit toujours baigné de sang ; il voulait et ne pouvait pas s’arracher de cette place.—LACRATÉLLE : *Histoire de France pendant les Guerres de Religion.*

us in the blood of that accursed Scot—offensam ense vindicabo.”

“My blade shall second you,” returned Harcourt, in the same tone.

II

The Huguenot.

“Chaque mot qu'il disait était un trait de flamme,
Qui pénétrait Henri jusqu'au fond de son âme.
Il quitte avec regret ce vieillard vertueux ;
Des pleurs en l'embrassant coulerent de ses yeux.”

—VOLTAIRE : *Henriade*, Chant i.

No sooner had Rosni quitted his sovereign's presence, than the venerable Florent Chrétien, approaching Henri, took his hand and pressed it fervently to his lips. As the king withdrew his fingers from the old man's grasp, he perceived they were wet with his tears.

“Nay, by my faith, my excellent friend,” he said, in a tone of great kindness, “this must not be. Tears from such eyes as yours are reproaches too cutting for endurance. I had rather you would chide me in the harshest terms you could employ, than assail me with the only weapons against which I am not proof. What would you have me do?”

“Does not your own great and generous heart, my liege,” returned the minister, “which prompts you to interpret the overflowing of an anxious breast into rebuke, tell you what course you ought to pursue? Does it not point out to you, that your life, precious in itself—but oh! of inestimable value to all members of our pure religion, to whom you are as Joshua or Maccabæus—may not be lightly imperilled by your own act without manifest departure from that high course which the King of kings hath appointed you to run; and which, in due season, if you remain true to

yourself, and to your cause, you will doubtless gloriously accomplish? Well and truly hath your faithful follower, the Baron de Rosni, spoken, when he averred that on your safety depends that of the true Church of Christ; and not in vain will my tears have been shed, if they avail to turn you from these vanities, and recall your nobler nature. Better I should lament than your enemies rejoice. Better one should blush in secret than a whole kingdom be turned to shame for its sovereign's defection. Cast off this slavery of the senses. Yield not to the devices and snares of the Prince of Darkness. You are our guardian, our bulwark, our tower of strength. Pause ere you wantonly expose our decimated flocks to the further ravages of these devouring wolves."

As he spoke, the old man's eyes glistened, and his looks kindled, till his glowing countenance wore an air of apostolic fervour, that produced, more than his words, a strong impression upon the king.

"Rest assured, my good friend," replied Henri, "I will in no way compromise my own security, or that of the Church over whose welfare I watch, and in whose behalf I have raised my banner. I have other and stronger motives than the mere love of such a pageant which attract me to these jousts, but I give you my word as a king, that I will place neither my life nor my personal safety in needless jeopardy. And now," he added, with a smile, "thanking you for your admonitory counsels, which, as you well know, are seldom pleasant in royal ears—and having scarce leisure for a longer homily, or even for further conference at this moment, let us turn to your own peculiar concerns. If you have any communication to make, delay it not. I am impatient to know how I can serve you."

"It is not in my own behalf that I would claim your majesty's services," rejoined the preacher, "but in that of one in whom you yourself are nearly interested. Know, sire, that a sister of the Prince of

Condé is at this moment a captive in the hands of the bloody Jezebel of France. It is for her deliverance from thralldom and oppression that I solicit your aid ; and if you are resolved to expose yourself to needless risk, let it be to effect the liberation of a princess of your own royal blood, a zealous believer in our creed, and, in the eyes of a searcher of knightly adventure, for as such I must regard your majesty, a distressed and forlorn damsel."

"If this, indeed, were as you represent it, my good friend," replied Henri, "you should have my instant aid, even though it were needful to bear her from the Louvre with my handful of men. But you have been deceived by some false statement. Our cousin of Condé has no sister at the court of France."

"The prince believes she perished in her infancy, sire," returned the preacher ; "but her preservation from the sword of those fierce Amalekites, who beset the good Louis de Bourbon on his flight to Rochelle, was little less than miraculous, as you will find, when I relate to you the history of this unfortunate princess, as it was delivered to me by one of the attendants of the queen-mother, who hath recently become a convert to our faith."

"Your information is derived from a suspicious quarter, messire," returned the king, with a smile of incredulity. "Catherine's cameriere are as deceitful to the full as the daughters of the Philistines. I know them of old. Your proselyte may prove a Delilah, after all, and her specious story only a snare laid to entrap you. Our uncle, Louis de Bourbon, it is true, hath often spoken of the hapless fate of his infant daughter in the mountain defiles, near Sancerre ; but he believed—nay, was assured—that she perished."

"Credit me, sire, she lives," replied Chrétien.

And then he succinctly detailed such particulars of Esclairmonde's story as are already familiar to the

reader; adding that the princess had been hitherto kept in ignorance of her illustrious origin, from a fear lest some inadvertence, not unnatural on the part of one so young and inexperienced, should betray her consciousness of her real rank and condition to the suspicions of Catherine, and militate against any plans formed for her deliverance. The preacher likewise stated that he had been summoned at an early hour on that morning to the Louvre by Annunziata (the attendant from whom he had obtained his knowledge of this important secret), to visit Esclairmonde; that she had revealed to him, without reserve, the events of the preceding night—imploing him to free her from the persecution of her royal lover, who, it appeared, had despatched a billet, stating that, if she offered further opposition to his passion, he would denounce her as a heretic to the Inquisition of the Catholic priesthood.

“She was bathed in tears when I entered the chamber,” said Chrétien, “and at first refused to be comforted; but, deeming the proper period arrived for its disclosure, I acquainted her with the illustrious stock from which she sprang, and besought her to comport herself like a descendant of that royal house.”

“Ha! corbleu! how received she the intelligence?”

“Like a daughter of the race of Bourbon,” replied Chrétien. “Her grief was at once checked, and she conferred calmly and deliberately with me upon the means of her evasion. One circumstance alone appeared to give her uneasiness—but I doubt whether I am at liberty to mention it to your majesty.”

“Do not mention it, then, my good friend,” returned the king, “if it is aught the princess would not wish to be divulged to me.”

“It is, however, desirable, I think, that your majesty should be acquainted with the state of her heart, the rather that you may form a judgment——”

"Whether the alliance be suitable, ha! messire? What cavalier has been so fortunate as to ingratiate himself into the good opinion of this captive princess?"

"A Scottish gentleman, my liege, who hath greatly distinguished himself at the court of your royal brother of France—the Chevalier Crichton."

"Mort de ma vie!" exclaimed Henri angrily; "doth he aspire to her hand?"

"Your majesty forgets that he knew her only as one of Queen Catherine's maids of honour."

"True," replied the king sternly; "but she is now our cousin, and as such no mate for an adventurer."

"It was her sense of this change in her condition, my liege, and of the impassable bar placed between her and her lover, that gave her so much pain; nor was her uneasiness diminished, when she learnt, as she shortly afterwards did, from a missive conveyed to her from the Chevalier Crichton, that he had by accident made the discovery of her exalted origin, and at the peril of his life wrested the proofs of it from Catherine's own hands; but in his endeavour to transmit the packet to her, while he was yet in the power of the queen-mother, it had been irrecoverably lost."

"Ventre-saint-gris!" exclaimed Henri; "were there such proofs?"

"The Chevalier Crichton affirmed that the packet contained letters from the queen-mother, the Maréchal de Tavannes, and the Cardinal of Lorraine,"

"Diable!" cried the king, with vivacity, "those letters were well worth the risk of a life, and would have obviated the necessity of bringing forward the scarce credible statement of your proselyte Annunziata. Heaven grant they have not fallen again into Catherine's clutches! It was a bold deed to tear her prey from the lioness, and this Crichton hath proved himself a cavalier of no mean prowess. One question more,

good Chrétien : did not this Scottish knight promise to finish his adventure by delivering our captive cousin ? ”

“ Of a verity, my liege, he did so,” returned the preacher, with some reluctance.

“ I knew as much,” said Henri, smiling. “ Esclairemonde is now at the Louvre ?—ha ! ”

“ In the train of Queen Louise, whom she accompanies at noon to the lists, where, by his majesty’s commands, she presides as sovereign arbitress. To-night there is a new fête and masque at the Louvre. Before that time she must be delivered from thralldom, or her fate is sealed.”

“ Before that hour she shall be delivered,” replied the king, “ or I will myself proclaim her rank before Henri and his assembled court. But time presses, good Chrétien, and I must to the tilt-yard.”

“ Your majesty——”

“ Is peremptory—headstrong—what you will. But waste no more words upon me. Tarry here till the jousts are over, and I will rejoin you.” As he spoke, the king made a sign to the Baron de Rosni, who, with a glance of ineffable disdain at the menacing gestures of the scholars, instantly rejoined him ; and, after a little further conversation with the preacher, and a valediction, which greatly scandalised the good old man, proffered to his buxom hostess, Henri and his follower quitted the cabaret.

They were about to mount the steeds awaiting their coming forth at the door of the tavern, when a band of equerries, pages, and gentlemen-ushers, in superb liveries of crimson velvet, slashed with yellow satin, accompanied by a crowd of trumpeters and hautboy-players, blowing loud flourishes, rode furiously down the Rue Pelican, shouting as they passed, “ Make way for the queen-mother—stand back—stand back.” Henri drew his cap closely over his brow at this

intimation, and appeared to busy himself about the saddle of his charger.

Presently Catherine appeared, mounted upon a beautiful Spanish jennet, and attended by her "*petite bande des dames*," all on horseback, on their way to the Louvre. It was impossible to conceive a gayer or more attractive sight than this brilliant troop of youthful dames, each attended by a page habited in her colours, presented. All were masked in demi-vizards of various dyes, and the beholder, therefore, could do little more than guess at the loveliness of their lineaments. But the brightness of the orbs, flashing through the apertures of those witching turrets de nez—the splendour of their attire—the grace they displayed on their steeds—the waving of their silken tresses—the elegance and lightness of their figures, left him in little incertitude as to the charms of feature thus enviously concealed from view.

In spite of the risk incurred by such a proceeding, Henri could not resist the temptation of stealing a glance at the fair equestrians, as they passed in review before him; and as the person of one, who seemed to be more exquisitely proportioned than her companions, attracted his ardent gaze, the damsel (it was La Rebours) remarked to her companion, "*Sainte-Marie ! La Fosseuse, only see how much that soldier resembles the King of Navarre !*"

"Nenni!" returned La Fosseuse pertly, "I discover no likeness; or, if there is any, the soldier has decidedly the advantage over the monarch—his shoulders are broader."

"Perhaps so," sighed La Rebours; "but the resemblance is very remarkable." And as she turned her head to satisfy herself of the fact, the king had disappeared. "How very singular!" she thought, musing on the circumstance as she rode along.

We will now return to the cabaret, and inquire after

the Gelosa. With difficulty the unhappy maiden mastered her terror when she perceived Ogilvy engaged in a second brawl with the scholars, and found herself deserted by both her protectors; but her alarm was greatly increased when, after the departure of the Baron de Rosni, the menaces of the scholars assumed a more determinately hostile shape, and the Scot was loudly threatened with death on all sides. Neither could the strong arms of Blount and the Swiss sergeant, nor the peaceful interposition of the preacher, avail to allay the storm. They cried out loudly for his blood, and swords and daggers were drawn—tables and benches overturned—glasses broken—deep and vindictive oaths uttered; and a sanguinary conflict must have ensued, had not the Chevalier de Guet and his two lieutenants, armed with partisans, and accompanied by several other personages in sable dresses, whose sallow countenances, as well as certain peculiarities in their costume, proclaimed them to be Italians, suddenly entered the tavern. The chief of the watch commanded peace in the king's name; and apprehensive of the consequences of a refusal to obey his order, the combatants were compelled to sheathe their blades. But in the meantime another event occurred, which gave a new turn to the affair, and served to re-awaken their suspended animosity.

As her eye rested upon the new-comers, Ginevra could not repress a faint scream, and, attracted by the sound, one of the foremost of their number instantly rushed towards her, and ere the hapless maiden could offer any resistance, she found herself in the power of the followers of Gonzaga. To rush to her assistance, to extricate her from the grasp of her assailant, was with Ogilvy the work of a moment. But his assistance was ineffectual. Ginevra only escaped from one hand to be retaken by the other. The Sorbonist twined his arms round the form of the flying girl and bore her

back to her captors. Ogilvy meanwhile had not relinquished the grasp he had fixed upon the Italian. In the struggle that succeeded, a packet fell from the doublet of the latter. The Scot recognised it at once.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, setting his foot upon the papers, "to the rescue, Blount—to the rescue—there is the object of our patron Crichton's search—the documents establishing the Princess Esclairmonde's birth—to the rescue—to the rescue!"

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed the preacher; "to his aid, young man. I would fain wield a sword in such a cause myself—help!—help!"

Blount needed not this incitement to draw sword. He threw himself resolutely upon the Italians, whose weapons were all directed against Ogilvy's breast, and struck the foremost of them to the ground. But his purpose was checked by a sudden and fatal issue being put to the combat. One of the followers of Gonzaga, watching his opportunity, plunged his stiletto deeply into Ogilvy's breast. Without a groan, though he felt himself mortally wounded, the Scot now stooped down, and receiving, as he did, numberless wounds from his adversaries, obtained possession of the packet.

"Take it," he said, as with a dying effort he reached the Englishman's side; "you know its destination—heed me not—away—my strength will not avail me to fly, but my heart goes with you and to my patron—tell him—but I cannot speak—go—go."

Uttering these words, he committed the packet to Blount's custody, and suddenly turning, confronted his adversaries with a look so fierce and desperate, that the boldest of them shrank back appalled.

"Follow me, messire," whispered Dame Fredegonde, who, under cover of the protecting arm of the Swiss sergeant, had ventured to approach the combatants;

"follow me," she said, plucking Blount's sleeve, "and you too, worthy sir," addressing the preacher, "you can render little assistance to that dying man, and your presence will only incite these murderous students to further acts of violence. Holy Virgin!—blessed Luther, I mean—but I scarcely know what I am saying—that such a fray as this should dishonour my dwelling. Maître Jacques, look to their swords—mercy upon us—ward them off—I will find means to requite your valour—come along, messires—quick—quick, this way,—this way." Blount looked irresolute.

"By Saint Ben'et," he said, "I never yet turned my back upon an enemy; and I see not why I should fly for the first time when I have a friend to avenge."

"If thou wouldst indeed avenge me, tarry not," cried Ogilvy. And as he spoke, the sword of one of his antagonists was thrust through his body, and the Scot fell to the earth.

"Let them not wholly triumph," gasped the dying man—"ah! he escapes," he cried, turning his glazing eyes in the direction of Blount, who, defended by the nervous arm and huge falchion of the Swiss, as well as by the dreaded fangs of his dog Druid, and guided by the friendly hostess, speedily effected his retreat, together with the preacher, through a small doorway, not hitherto observed by the guests. As this door was closed and barricaded by the stalwart person of Maître Jacques, a smile of exultation lighted up Ogilvy's features: "I die content," he murmured.

At this moment a piercing shriek rent the air. It proceeded from the Gelosa. Her captors were about to bear her off; but, finding her outcries continued, one of them twisted a scarf round her throat in such a manner that it was impossible for the wretched maiden to utter further sound. This done, regarding neither the entreaties of Dame Fredegonde, nor the impotent

threats of Ogilvy, they disappeared with their prey. At the same time the Chevalier du Guet and his attendants quitted the tavern.

“Recreants,” eried the Scot, who had raised himself upon one arm—“will none lend a hand to the rescue?—will none help her? That youth, as you deem him, is a maiden in disguise—will ye stand by and see wrong done to a woman? To the rescue, if ye be men!”

“Think you we will defend thy leman, fool,” said the Sorbonist, with derisive laughter, as he passed him; “our vengeance is now fully complete—thou art robbed of life and thy mistress—ha—ha! Come, comrades, let us to the lists. This augurs well. This Scot’s countryman may chance to meet a like downfall. We shall see. And hark ye, messires, if we can lay hands upon that heretic preacher, we will see if there is a fagot to be found in the Pré-aux-Clercs—

Death to the Huguenot!—fagot and flame!

Death to the Huguenot!—torture and shame!

Death!—Death!”

And, all joining in this menacing chorus, the scholars quitted the cabaret. Scarcely had the reckless troop gained the street, when a band of men, wearing the livery of the Vicomte de Joyeuse, entered the chamber.

“Where is the youth whom we are to conduct from Paris?” asked their leader, glancing around in astonishment and alarm.

“In the hands of——” gasped Ogilvy.

But ere he could complete the sentence, the brave Scot became for ever silent.

III

The Procession.

Genets, coursiers, riches bardes, houssures,
Plumars remplis d'orphaveries fines,
Chamfrains dorés à grans entrelassures,
Armets luysans, bicquoquets, capelines,
Bucques de pris, tres riches mantelines.

ANDRE DE LA VIGNE : *Le Vergier d'Honneur.*

As the hour for opening the lists drew nigh, all the avenues and approaches of the Louvre were thronged with eager and curious crowds hurrying from each quarter to behold the chivalrous pageant. This course consisted of every class of society to be found in the vast and miscellaneous population of Paris, from the sedate citizen and his demure spouse, to be distinguished by propriety of gear (costume being then regulated by sumptuary laws), down to the rough half-clothed boatman who plied upon the Seine, and the sturdy artisan who haunted its banks. Nor must we omit a host of Jews, beggars, truands, and other nondescript vagabonds who usually formed the mass of a Parisian crowd at the period of our narrative. Amongst these the magistrates of the city, the provosts of the merchants, the echevins and their followers, in bipartite robes of crimson, and tawny-coloured stuffs embroidered with a silver ship (the civic cognisance), the sergeants, archers, cross-bowmen, and arquebusiers of the town-guard cut a conspicuous figure.

As usually happens, however, where a crowd is collected, the softer sex predominated. For one steel or felt cap there were ten coifs of silk or linen. Nor were the members of the various religious fraternities wanting : the grey or russet frock—the cowl, or shaven head—and the long staff—might be detected amid the

dense assemblage. Cordeliers, Carmelites, and Minims were mingled with the higher dignitaries of the Church. The students of the university, ever on the alert when a spectacle was about to take place, herded thither in vast bands. Here came a courtly abbé—it was our acquaintance, Pierre de Bourdeille—upon a mule with its superb housings, followed by a train of richly clad lacqueys.

The mob doffed their caps as Brantôme ambled on. Next appeared what in our own time would be regarded with much merriment, but which was then a matter of too frequent occurrence to excite either surprise or ridicule—a couple of gaily attired youths mounted upon the same steed; then a cavalier and dame, likewise on horseback, the latter seated on a velvet pillion, her features concealed, as was the universal mode with the ladies when out of doors, by a demi-mask. The housings of the charger were unusually superb; his broad martingal and wide-reined bridle being of crimson leather richly ornamented with gold.

Next followed a company of singly mounted cavaliers, with a host of valets and attendants arrayed in the extremity of the court fashion, with nodding feathers and fluttering mantles; the curvetting of their coursers, and the blows of their houssines, as they dashed recklessly onwards, occasioned considerable confusion amongst the foot-passengers; and the smiles and compliments they lavished upon the fair citoyennes and their daughters, hardly compensated with the bluff burgesses for their own sprained shoulders and broken heads. Nevertheless, in spite of the jostling and hustling, the striving, straining, and squeezing, the utmost good humour prevailed; but this, indeed, might be attributed to the presence of so many armed authorities.

Loud shouts were now raised, and the multitude was pushed backwards, and driven into more compact masses as the magnificent litter of the Queen of Navarre was

borne along to the Louvre. In vain did the spectators endeavour to catch a glimpse of the features or person of the lovely Marguerite. A mask defied their scrutiny, and she leaned back in her carriage as if anxious to elude observation. Not so her attendant, Torigni. The swan-like throat of the sprightly Florentine might be observed above the sides of the vehicle, and her snowy hand, divested of its glove, and covered with rings, negligently arranged a raven ringlet. Marguerite's litter swept by, and was followed by the huissiers and guard of the governor of Paris. René de Villequier boasted the most magnificent caroché in Paris; and the vehicle which, upon this occasion, conveyed the portly person of the marquis, was little inferior in decoration and gilding, though somewhat different in construction, from our own Lord Mayor's state equipage.

Then came the trampling of hoofs, and the loud fanfares of trumpets, and the superbly accoutred band of Gascon gentlemen—forty-five in number, whence their designation—commanded by the Baron d'Epernon, wheeled into sight; the sunbeams brightly glancing upon their corslets, and upon the tips of their lances. The last fourteen of this gallant company were sheathed in complete steel, with yellow scarves crossing their burnished cuirasses. Two pages succeeded in the violet-coloured livery of the baron, with his blazon displayed upon their sleeves and doublets. Then came his esquires sustaining his shield, charged likewise with his cognisance; and lastly appeared D'Epernon himself, in a costly suit of russet armour, enriched with chiselled arabesques and deep reliefs of gold.

Scarcely had the admiration excited by the baron's retinue subsided, ere the spectators were attracted towards a further display of knightly splendour. A flourish of trumpets blown by six mounted men-at-arms, whose clarions were ornamented with silken bandrols fringed with gold, displaying the princely scutcheon of

the family of Gonzaga, announced the approach of the Duke of Nevers. The duke rode a noble Arabian courser, and proceeded at a slow and stately pace. His valets and pages were more numerous than those of the Baron d'Epernon, and he was attended by four gentlemen-ushers, who walked by his side bare-headed, with wands in their hands. He was fully armed in a suit of Milan steel, of the finest workmanship; his breastplate was brighter than silver, and reflected the rays of the sun as from a dazzling mirror. His burganet and his corslet were crusted with gold and pearls, and from his neck, suspended to a chain of the same metal, hung the order of the Saint Esprit. A plume of white ostrich feathers nodded on his crest.

His demeanour was so dignified, and his train so sumptuous, that his appearance was greeted by the assemblage with deafening acclamations—acknowledged by the proud duke with a haughty inclination of the head. Nor was the popularity of the wily Italian diminished, as his attendants showered amongst the mob broad silver pieces, for which they fought and scrambled. By his side, in full ecclesiastical costume of scarlet silk sinar with lawn sleeves and snowy rochet, and upon a sleek well-fed mule, led by two attendants, each of whom had a hand upon the bridle, rode Pierre de Gondi, Bishop of Paris, a prelate in high favour with the queen-mother, to whom, indeed, he owed his elevation. There was something sinister in the dark and shifting glance of this Florentine churchman, which seemed to confirm the horrible reports that prevailed as to the motives of Catherine's predilection for him. But be this as it may, the hypocritical smile which now lit up his sallow features, was construed by the observers into an expression of infinite benevolence, the rather that his almoner, who followed closely at his heels, distributed a dole with no sparing hand.

Immediately behind the suite of the Duc de Nevers

came an esquire of Vincenzo de Gonzaga, bearing a small triangular shield painted white, on which appeared the device of a sable mask, inscribed with the motto—Vendetta. This esquire wore the livery of the prince (the combined hues of red and yellow) displayed in the flowing satin housings of his steed, traversed with broad cross-bars of orange and crimson, in his slashed velvet doublet, haut-de-chausses of different dyes, and parti-coloured plumes. Next advanced a band of youthful pages magnificently attired, and mounted on coursers caparisoned in cloth of gold, barred like the housings of the esquire, the stripes being described upon their gorgeous trappings by alternate lines of frieze-wrought and smooth-beaten tissue. Upon the silken just-au-corps of each page was embroidered in golden thread the dueal badge of Mantua and Monteferrat. So gorgeous were their appointments in detail, that their bonnets, shoes, saddles, bridles, and even the scabbards of their rapiers, blushed with crimson velvet.

Then followed a host of laqueys on foot, similarly though less splendidly arrayed; then another esquire sustaining the tri-coloured lance of the prince, decorated with silken pennoneel; then two foot-pages attired in habiliments of cloth of gold and silk, leading his steed—a mighty Allemayne charger with eyes of flame, expanded nostril, and pawing hoof—furnished for Gonzaga's use by the provident Due de Nevers. Thick crimson velvet housing, enwoven with the dueal eognisance, covered this noble animal, and descended almost to his pastern joints; the saddle was of velvet of the same hue as the rest of the harness; the chamfrin, or headpiece, was of gilded mail, with a short projecting steel pike; and tufts of scarlet and saffron-stained plumes adorned his front and croup.

Lastly, armed cap-à-pie, in a suit of black mail embossed with gold and precious stones, rode the Prince Vincenzo. A garde-bras, or haute-pièce, as it was

subsequently termed, covered the front of his cuirass, and defended his throat and left arm, so far as the gauntlet; but being of a single piece, and introduced in those later days of chivalry, for the better security of the jousts, the posture assumed by the knight, who adopted this safeguard in the combat, became fixed and unalterable as that of a statue, his right arm alone being left at liberty. A tall egret of sable feathers shadowed his helm; and with his visor closed, and maintaining, of necessity, a stern and moveless attitude, Gonzaga passed slowly onwards. His cortège was completed by another band of gaudy valets, and the minstrels, who enlivened the procession with the tambour, the cornet, and the clarion.

A fresh clangour of trumpets admonished the spectators that other comers were at hand; and the announcement was speedily followed by the brilliant retinue of the Vicomte de Joyeuse, which, if it could not vie with that of Gonzaga in magnificence, surpassed it in number and consequence, consisting of a throng of lordlings and youthful gentlemen of the best families of France, who were eager upon this occasion to array themselves under the banners of their monarch's chief favourite, and to distinguish themselves with the snowy scarf which he had adopted as his ensign. It was true, the same prodigality of cloth of gold and velvet was not here exhibited as in the preceding cavalcade:—

Mais de harnois, ne d'armure de joute,
Ne leur failloit une petite pièce.

There was no lack of “tilting furniture, emblazoned shields.” A gayer troop was never seen. Nor could a greater contrast have been found to that which preceded it. The vivacity of their hilarious leader seemed to have diffused itself throughout his company. Success appeared to be written on their beaming

features. Nothing was heard but shouts of laughter, and the jingling of arms ; nothing seen but the waving of plumes and banners, the glitter of helm and spear, and caracoling of coursers.

Completely armed in a suit of polished steel, Joyeuse rode a charger barded with ung bel et grand couvre-chief of silver tissue, edged with azure fringe, and wore a scarf of white silk, richly embroidered, thrown across his left shoulder. From his morion floated a lambrequin of slashed satin, and his surcoat was decorated with his armorial bearings. His handsome countenance was radiant with gaiety ; and he conversed in an animated manner with a knight, who careered by his side, and upon whom, even more than the vicomte, the attention of the gazers was fixed. Nor was the appearance of this cavalier undeserving the admiration he excited. He seemed the very mirror of chivalry. The experienced horsemen applauded the consummate grace with which he sat his courser (a powerful and beautifully formed bay, whose skin shone almost as brightly as his rider's coat-of-mail), and the ease with which he ever and anon compelled him to perform the balotades, croupades, and other graces of the high manège, alluded to in the following alliterative verses :—

Vite virade,
Pompante pannade,
Saut soulevant,
Prompte petarrade,

while the female portion of the assemblage marvelled at the exceeding beauty of feature, disclosed by the open visor of his casque, and the manly symmetry of the limbs, defined by his light and curiously fashioned breastplate, “brassards, cuissards, jamb, and solleret.” The housings of his steed were of white damask, diapered with gold, and bordered with minever. His chamfrin was decorated, like that of Gonzaga, with a superbe houpe de plumes, and similarly accoutred.

From the crest of the knight depended a lambrequin of slashed silk; and his surcoat was woven with his blazon, a lion rampant azure, armed, and langued gules.

Following this preux chevalier rode two esquires, in liveries of azure and white; the one carrying his painted lance, on the coronel of which was fastened a knot of ribands, the gage, doubtless, of the dame in whose honour he was about to run a course; the other bearing a silver shield with the device of a dragon vert, spouting out fire, and the motto, "Loyal au mort," inscribed in blue characters upon a scroll.

When it became known to the assemblage that this knight, in whom all felt so much interest, was no other than the Admirable Crichton, the adversary of the Prince of Mantua, their acclamations were so loud and deafening, and the efforts of those in the rear so strenuous to obtain a nearer view of his person and features, that it required the application of both partisan and sword on part of the attendants to keep back the rabble; while the object of their curiosity, apprehensive of some such tumult taking place as occurred on the preceding day at the university, was fain to set spurs to his charger, and to urge his companions into a quicker movement, in order to escape from observation.

"By my halidom!" exclaimed Joyeuse, as they reached the grand portal of the Louvre, and found the space before it invested with a gay confusion of litters, caroches, steeds, lacqueys, and pages in various and resplendent liveries—"to judge from this rout we shall have a goodly attendance at our jousting. You must do your devoir gallantly, mon cher, for you will have the eyes of all the chivalry and beauty of France upon you. There is not a magnate of our court whose colours I do not discern amidst this rout of servitors. But we are late. Those knaves in the slashed doublets form part of the train of our challenger's padrino. Gonzaga is already in the stecato."

"Better be the last to enter the field than the first to quit it," replied Crichton, smiling. "But whom have we here? By Saint Andrew! my gossip, Chicot. So ho! Bayard," he cried, patting the neck of his charger, who, obedient to his voice, instantly stood still, but evinced his impatience by arching his neck, champing at the bit, snorting and pawing the ground.

"What wouldst thou?" demanded the Scot, as the jester approached him with an odd serio-comic look.

"I am the bearer of a cartel to thee," replied the jester, in a tone of mock defiance.

"Gramercy — gossip — a challenge!" ejaculated Crichton, "from thy brother, Siblot, to shiver a marotte against his cock's-comb? Ha! But know'st thou not, that by the laws of honour I am restrained from entering into a second quarrel until my first be disposed of?"

"I know it," answered Chicot, in an undertone. "But you must offer some response, yea or nay, to my appeal. Here is the missive," he added, delivering a perfumed note, sealed and secured with a silken thread, to the Scot; "peruse it, and deliver me your answer without wrong or supersticerie."

"The cipher of the Queen of Navarre!" exclaimed Crichton, as he regarded the billet; "nay, then, it is indeed a combat à outrance."

"I would advise you to decline the encounter, or rather peaceably to arrange it," returned the jester; "but in the meantime, will it please you to read the cartel, and furnish me with some token of your intentions to convey to my royal mistress?"

Crichton hastily broke open the seal, and as his eye glanced over the contents of the note, a slight flush of anger rose upon his cheek.

"I will rather perish than accept the terms she proposes," he murmured, tearing it in pieces, and scattering the fragments to the breezes.

"Hold, gossip," cried Chicot; "reserve that thread of gold; I am to take that to her majesty as a sign of your acquiescence."

"Never," answered Crichton sternly; "tell her I have burst her chains. She would have some token—'tis well," he added, withdrawing his gauntlet from his hand, and giving the bezoar ring to the jester; "let this gem be a proof to her, that I neither fear her threats, nor will accept of her tenderness."

"Par Saint Fiacre en Brie!" cried Chicot, looking after him with a smile of derision, as he dashed swiftly through the gateway, "I will prove a better friend to thee than thou deservest. This ring will well beseem my own finger, while this thread," he added, picking up the fastening of the billet, "will perfectly content her jealous majesty of Navarre. For what saith the good Pantagruel?—

Paternostres et oraisons
Sont pour ceux-là qui les retiennent;
Ung fiffre allant en fenaisons,
Est plus fort que deux qui en viennent."

And chanting this wholesome advice "de la marraine de mon grand-père," he entered the lofty portal of the Louvre.

IV

The Lists.

"Ce jour de may en beau harnois de guerre,
Nous joustames assez doucettlement,
Et de noz fais qui en voudroit enquerre
Icy n'en fais mencion autrement."

—LOUIS DE BEAUVEAU: *Les Pas de la Bergiere.*

ACCOMPANIED by the Vicomte de Joyeuse, Crichton now rode into the champ clos appointed for the combat. Erected within a court, at the back of the Louvre, the lists were elevated to the height of the thigh-piece of

the jousts, and extended to the length of sixty yards; while the space within the barriers, being carefully sanded and cleared of all impediments, offered a very advantageous arena for the exhibition of knightly prowess.

Along the façade of the palace, on a level with the windows now thrown open, for the convenience of the spectators, was raised a temporary balcony, descending in wide steps, and hung with magnificent tapestry. Divided, at certain distances, into open canopies, fashioned of the richest brocade, decorated with fleurs-de-lys ciphers and escutcheons, and fluttering with silken streamers, this balcony occupied one side of the quadrangular court.

At the farther extremity of the lists stood a grand roofed gallery, supported by heavy pillars, destined for the reception of the three queens, their attendants, and dames of honour. The curtains and hangings of this splendid structure were of gridelin velvet, flowered with ciphers of silver, displaying in the centre a vast argent shield, emblazoned with the royal escutcheon of France.

At the right of the tilt-yard was placed a scaffold, with palisades reserved for Montjoie, the king-at-arms, the marshals and judges of the field; and next to it, under a canopy fretted with gold, ran a line of tabourettes set apart for the favourites of Henri Trois, in the centre of which was raised a velvet fauteuil for his majesty's own occupation. At either end stood two pavilions of striped silk for the use of the esquires, armourers, and other attendants of the combatants.

Upon a low scaffold to the left of the grand gallery, guarded by four officials, disguised in the ghastly leaden-coloured hood called the chaperon, and surrounded by a band of halberdiers, stood Ruggieri, with his hands folded upon his bosom, and his eyes fixed upon the ground.

Indicating to his retinue the position they were to occupy, Joyeuse rode through the entrance of the

lists and joined the marshals of the field. Crichton followed more slowly. The breast of the Scot beat high as he gazed on the inspiring scene.

The morning was bright and beautiful; the sunbeams glanced on casque, and corslet, and on the thousand dyes of banner and blazon; the soft breeze, tempered by the genial warmth of approaching spring, served with its freshening breath to give enthusiasm to the heart, and vigour to the frame; and so fully did Crichton feel the influence of these stirring thoughts, that, spurring his charger, he compelled him to perform a demi-volte in the air, and then to career round the arena.

All was animation and excitement. The rustle of silks, the pleasant sound of gentle voices, the flash of brilliants from above, announced the arrival of the anges de paradis (as they were rapturously termed by the minstrels) in the balconies. Each casement of the Louvre poured forth its stream of beauty; and as the Scot gazed upon those lovely and high-born dames, whose natural charms were heightened to the utmost by the aid of the costliest ornament and dress, he felt his bosom beat with redoubled ardour.

Reining his steed, he paused to look around. On all sides were ranged dense masses of spectators, over whose uncovered heads bristled the glancing pikes and halberds of the sergeants. On the right of the royal gallery were arrayed the fourteen followers of D'Epernon, glistening in steel, and headed by the baron himself: on the left, behind the scaffold of the astrologer, stood the sumptuous retinue of the Duc de Nevers.

Bands of cavaliers, who, on the appearance of the dames on the balcony, regardless of the interdiction of the heralds, had dashed into the course, were now seen extending their lances towards its sides, whence fell a shower of wreaths, bracelets, and scarves, which were speedily attached to salade and spear. Much

occupation was thus given to the king-at-arms and the marshals, whose province was to maintain a clear field ; and the champions, waving their hands to the mistresses of their hearts, quitted the ring. Amid the subordinate officers of the tilt-yard must be enumerated the pursuivants, the trumpeters with their clarions dressed with silken flags, and troops of minstrels stationed at each outlet.

A shout was now raised by the crowd, and the Scot's attention was directed towards the grand gallery, in which the Queen Louise and her demoiselles made their appearance. Amid the latter Crichton at once distinguished Esclairmonde. The Princess of Condé was perfectly pale, but her want of bloom in no wise detracted from her loveliness. On the contrary, she had never before appeared so eminently beautiful in the eyes of her lover ; nor had he heretofore, as he thought, remarked so much dignity and self-possession in her demeanour. In fact, the events of the last night, and the knowledge so recently and mysteriously acquired of her exalted origin, had worked a sudden but entire change in Esclairmonde's character. She was no longer an orphan maiden without name, and without family. She now felt a pride, of which she had been hitherto unconscious, kindled within her bosom ; and a resolution, as yet wholly unknown to her, animate and sustain her spirits against the perils and difficulties to which she was exposed.

This new-sprung courage was the more fully proved in the ordeal to which she was shortly afterwards subjected in an interview with Catherine de Medicis and Marguerite de Valois, both of whom, with their attendants, now entered the gallery. But her firmness did not fail her in this trial ; and she returned the scrutinising look of the queen-mother with a glance as lofty as her own.

Marguerite was all smiles and courtesy; but the smile of a rival is little to be trusted, and Crichton, who was well acquainted with Marguerite's talent for dissimulation, read in her professions of friendship, and winning attentions, the deadliest treachery.

These greetings concluded, Esclairmonde, at the request of Queen Louise, took the throne appointed for her as sovereign arbitress of the tourney—a chair placed a little in advance of the royal seats, and so situated as to make her the principal object of attraction to the spectators. Her costume was a robe of white damask, flowered with silver, with sleeves of snowy silk of the ample mode of the period, embroidered with roseate and green pearls. Never had Queen of the Lists appeared so attractive; and a murmur of admiration arose from the multitude as she became more fully revealed to their view.

At this moment the gaze of the princess fell upon the knightly figure of her lover, who, bending to his saddle-bow, gracefully tendered his homage. As she returned the salutation, Esclairmonde trembled, and her courage entirely forsook her. Crichton perceived the change in her deportment, and anxious, if possible, to dissipate her anxiety, compelled his steed into its liveliest caracoles; and was about to quit the field, when his progress was arrested by loud cries of "Noel! Noel!—vive le roi—vive le roi!" Fanfares of trumpets and the clash of cymbals succeeded, and Henri, fully and magnificently armed, entered into the arena. He was attended by the Marquis de Villequier, Saint-Luc, and a courtly throng. The royal charger (a snowy Arabian) was caparisoned with sweeping bardes of crimson velvet,

Toutes chargées de riche orphaverie,

and figured with golden fleurs-de-lys. Courteously saluting the Scot, and bidding him prepare for the

signal of the combat, which would be shortly given, Henri directed his course towards the grand gallery, and addressing Esclairmonde, solicited a favour at her hands, that he might break a lance in her behalf.

Unable to refuse his request, Esclairmonde took a string of pearls from her rich auburn tresses, and despatched it to the monarch by a page. Acknowledging the boon with a smile of gratification, and passing many well-turned compliments upon her charms, Henri proceeded to hold a brief conference with the Duc de Nevers.

Crichton, meanwhile, rode into the pavilion appropriated to his attendants, the hangings of which were closely drawn after him. Dismounting from his steed, he was presently joined by the Vicomte de Joyeuse, Montjoie, and Pierre de Gondi, by the latter of whom the customary oaths of the combat were administered. Kissing the crucifix and the *Te igitur*, the Scot next submitted himself to his armourer, who rivetted upon his cuirass a placcate of shining steel similar to that borne by Gonzaga. Being thus fully equipped for the fight, notwithstanding the increased weight of his armour, he vaulted into the saddle without the aid of the stirrup; and taking his lance from his esquire, awaited the signal for the combat.

Henri having by this time taken his seat beneath the canopy, gave with his baton a signal to Montjoie, the king-at-arms, who, attended by two heralds, advanced, amidst a flourish of clarions and hautboys, towards the centre of the arena, and, commanding silence, proclaimed in a loud voice the names and titles of the appellant and the defendant, together with their cause of quarrel, prohibiting all persons whatsoever from offering interruption, by word or sign, to the combat.

Fresh fanfares of trumpets succeeded this ceremonial, during which all eyes had been fixed upon Ruggieri,

who, though pale as death, maintained a composed and resolute demeanour, ever and anon stealing a glance towards the gallery, in which sat the queen-mother. Silence being once more restored, Montjoie cried aloud—

“Faites vos devoirs, chevaliers.”

On the third call, the curtains of the pavilions were swiftly drawn aside, and both knights issued forth, each taking up a position at the right of the barriers. Esclairmonde's bosom palpitated with emotion as she beheld the stately figure of her lover, cased in steel, thus suddenly set before her, and recognised her own gage upon his lance's point. Any fears she might have entertained for his safety vanished in his presence, and, with a heart throbbing with expectation, she heard the first blast of the clarion sound for the hostile career. A profound hush now reigned throughout the assemblage. Even the royal tenants of the gallery rose and advanced towards its edge, and Marguerite de Valois, disregarding Montjoie's injunction, leaned over the side of the balcony and waved her hand.

Crichton perceived the action, and, unable otherwise to account for it, attributed it to some return of tenderness on the part of the impassioned queen.

Again the trumpet sounded, and as the blast was blown, Crichton struck his spurs into his steed, executing a demi-volte to the right, while he slightly raised his lance in the air, bringing the truncheon within a few inches of his thigh, in readiness for the career. In this action were displayed the unequalled grace and dexterity in the management of his steed for which the Scot was so eminently distinguished. The martial notes of the clarion now resounded for the third time, and hurling a gauntlet to the ground, Montjoie shouted, in a voice of thunder—

“Laissez-les aller—laissez-les aller.”

Swift as bolt from cloud, Crichton, at this signal,

speeded from his post. As the steed started on his rapid career, the Scot, quick as thought, raised the truncheon of his lance to a level with his line of vision, and then, firmly fixing it in its rest, declined its point towards the left ear of his charger as he approached within some half-dozen paces of his adversary, and directed his aim against the upper part of his helm. Both lances were shivered as the champions met in mid career.

Gonzaga's mark had been the same as that of his antagonist, but the point of his lance glanced from the sharp gorget of the plastron; while the blow of Crichton, taking place upon the crest of the prince, carried off the panache with which it was surmounted, and scattered the plumes far and wide over the field. Neither, however, had been dismounted; and as each knight gracefully brought his steed to rest, and hurled away the truncheon of his broken lance, he opened his gauntlet to show that he had sustained no injury from the encounter.

Snatching fresh lances from the attendants, the combatants again started on a new career. In this second attaint, the advantage was decidedly in favour of the Scot, his lance striking his adversary's visor, and staggering him so much that he could with difficulty rein in his charger. Notwithstanding the shock he had sustained, the prince seized a sharp-pointed lance from his esquire, and bidding a pursuivant communicate his intentions to his opponent, prepared for the final course.

The excitement of the spectators was now raised to the highest pitch. On the issue of this trial depended the fate of the accused, and the movements of the combatants were watched with intense interest. For the third time they started upon their career.

Upon this occasion the steel edge of Gonzaga's lance drew sparkles from the beaver of the Scot, as it came

in contact with his helm ; but the blow, though well directed, could not shake the firm horseman in his saddle. Not so was it with Gonzaga. The stroke of Crichton, into which he had thrown all his force, was dealt with such resolution upon the visor of Vincenzo, that, unable to resist its violence, and still maintaining his hold of the bridle, horse and rider were hurled backwards upon the dust.

Instantly recovering his feet, and unclasping his visor, with a countenance flushed with shame and fury, the prince walked across the lists to the tribunal of the judges, and claimed, in a haughty tone, to be allowed the privilege of the combat with the sword. This request was peremptorily refused ; but Crichton, riding up at the same moment, generously seconded his adversary's request, and refusing to consider the triumph he had obtained as decisive, Montjoie's objections were overruled, and the combatants retired to renew their conflict with different weapons. The cheers, meanwhile, from the lookers-on were almost stunning ; and the courtesy of the Scot was on all hands loudly applauded.

Crichton now withdrew to the pavilion, where his armourer unbraced his *haute-pièce*, and furnished him with another and lighter morion of Damascus steel, crested with a tall cluster of white feathers. A long estoc was girt to his side, and to the pommel of his saddle was fastened a keen, well-tempered *miséricorde*. Thus accoutred, he mounted a light, agile barb, sent to him by the Vicomte de Joyeuse, as being fitter for the rapid and furious passades he would now have to perform, than his own charger, and returned to the lists, "*bien gentement ferant de l'esperon.*"

Meanwhile the barriers traversing the arena had been removed, and the space was left vacant for the combat. As the Scot passed through the outer pales, his visor was raised, and he cast a look towards the

gallery in which Esclairmonde was seated. The princess rose as he appeared, and gracefully saluted him. Crichton returned her greeting, and unsheathing his sword, kissed the hilt, as if vowing to draw it in her name. The action was not unobserved by Marguerite de Valois, over whose countenance came a sudden and fearful change.

The Vicomte de Joyeuse on the one hand, and the Duc de Nevers on the other, had in the interim marked out upon the sand of the tilt-yard a circular space, within the limits of which it was necessary that the combatants should keep. Armed in all respects like his antagonist, and similarly mounted, Gonzaga now rode into the lists. Making a motion to the Duc de Nevers that he desired an instant's speech with the Chevalier Crichton, apart from their parrains, he rode towards the Scot, who sheathed his sword as he drew nigh and advanced to meet him.

This proceeding on the part of the prince was watched with great anxiety by the spectators, who were apprehensive lest they should lose the most interesting part of the anticipated spectacle. Their doubts, however, were quickly relieved on noting the imperious gestures of Gonzaga, and the corresponding haughtiness with which they were received by his adversary.

"Chevalier Crichton," said the prince, in a deep, low tone, "I am aware that by the laws of arms I am already vanquished, and not more so by your address than by your generosity. So much am I beholden to you for the opportunity you have afforded me of redeeming my honour, that I would evince my sense of your high and chivalrous conduct by the proffer of my friendship, if you will accept it in lieu of doing battle upon a quarrel which, methinks, might be easily adjusted."

"Prince of Mantua," replied Crichton courteously, "I should be proud to accept your friendship if I could

do so without impeachment of my honour. But it may not be. I have denounced Ruggieri as false and perjured ; an enemy of God, and a traitor to his king. You have falsified my charge—and I must make good the accusation with my sword.”

“Enough,” replied the prince haughtily ; “once and again, I thank you. You have now liberated me from the weight of obligation under which my spirit laboured. The combat which ensues must be a duel to the death. Your generosity might have restrained my arm. It is now free to strike—and, by Saint Paul, I charge you to look well to yourself.”

“To your post, then, prince,” replied Crichton sternly ; “and by the aid of God, our Lady, and Saint Andrew the good knight, I will approve with my body against your body the justice of my quarrel.”

So saying, with a proud salutation, he closed the visor of his helm, and backed his charger till he brought him in a line with the Vicomte de Joyeuse, while Gonzaga, turning his horse’s head, rejoined his sponsor and second, the Due de Nevers.

After some little further delay, the combatants, placed about forty paces asunder, awaited, with rapier drawn, and beaver up, the fulfilment of the trumpeter’s devoir. As the third charge was sounded, grasping the rein firmly with his left hand, plunging his spurs up to the rowel in the flanks of his steed, and raising his sword-arm in the air, each champion dashed furiously against the other, dealing, as he passed him, a mandritta, or blow from right to left, on his antagonist’s casque, and then wheeling suddenly round, performed a demi-volte with curvets, and returning with the same fury as before, reiterated his stroke.

Upon the third encounter, executing a shorter demi-volte, Crichton turned sharply round, and faced his assailant. Continuing their curvets and voltes, each champion then discharged a succession of imbrocatas

and riversas upon his enemy's morion and breast-plate.

No attempt on either side, on the onset, appeared to be made to ward off those blows, but on the third volte, Crichton directed a heavy stramazone (or cutting blow) against Gonzaga's crest. The prince raised his estoc to beat away the blow, but the weapon flew from his grasp, and so terrible was the stroke, that Crichton's own blade shivered to the hilt. Plucking his dagger from its sheath, and grasping it in his right hand, each now spurred his steed close to that of his antagonist. Accustomed to this species of encounter, the animals stood stock still. Crichton then grasped the left hand of his enemy, and a deadly struggle ensued.

It was evident to the spectators that a few more blows would now decide the conflict, and their interest rose in proportion. Not a breath was drawn. Esclairmonde leaned over the balcony with a look as if her own life hung upon that of her lover. Nor could Catherine de Medicis, whose cause was leagued with that of the opposite party, control her anxiety. At this moment, a voice soft and low, in whose tones, altered as they were by passion, she yet recognised those of Marguerite de Valois, reached the ear of the Princess of Condé.

"I would give my soul to perdition," said the Queen of Navarre, "to see the poignard of Gonzaga pierce the heart of his enemy."

"For pity's sake—wherefore?" asked the princess, without removing her gaze from the combatants.

"To be avenged of thee," answered Marguerite, in a hollow voice.

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed the princess, "thy horrible wish is accomplished—he falls—he falls."

In the struggle it appeared that the dagger of the prince, glancing from the corslet of the Scot, had dangerously wounded the steed of the latter in the

neck. The blood gushed in torrents from the deep gash, and the horse reeled with faintness. Pursuing an advantage obtained contrary to the laws of the combat, which forbade hurt to be done to the charger, Gonzaga threw himself furiously upon his antagonist, endeavouring to drive him beyond the boundary described upon the arena ; but Crichton, feeling his steed totter under him, avoided the blow by leaning backwards, and disengaging at the same moment his feet from the stirrup, leaped to the ground, and ere the prince could regain his balance, seized him by the arm, and dragged him from the saddle.

The conflict was now continued on foot. Blow after blow was dealt upon helm and cuirass. The tilt-yard rang like the forge of an armourer. Hacked off by the trenchant edges of the poignards, chips of the gold embossments and enamel strewed the arena, promising a rich harvest to the heralds. Gonzaga displayed all the address of a finished man-at-arms. In strength he was evidently inferior to his antagonist, but so expert was he in the use of the dagger, so dexterous in avoiding foyns and thrusts which must have proved fatal had they taken effect, that the spectators felt doubtful as to the issue of the strife.

At length, the poignard of Crichton, driven through the vantbrace of the prince, but without inflicting more than a trifling scratch, snapped in twain, and he appeared at the mercy of his opponent. Ruggieri lifted up his hands, and uttered an exclamation of joy. "Now Heaven be praised!" cried Catherine de Medicis, "the right will triumph."

"He is not yet vanquished, madame," exclaimed Esclairmonde ; "and, trust me, the right will triumph."

As she spoke, the prince advanced his dagger's point to the throat of Crichton, and glancing at him through the bars of his visor, commanded him to yield.

"Yield," replied Crichton fiercely, "it is a word

I have never pronounced. Let this decide the combat."

And, with the broken blade of his poignard, he delivered so terrible a blow upon the morion of the prince, that head and casque appeared to be crushed by it. Gonzaga fell without sense or motion; a stream of gore flowing from out his visor.

"Yield, prince!" exclaimed Crichton, stooping over him, and snatching the dagger from his loosening grasp, "or, by Saint Andrew! you have breathed your last." But Gonzaga answered not.

At this moment the Duc de Nevers and the Vicomte de Joyeuse, followed by Montjoie and his attendant, spurred their horses to the spot.

"The victory is yours, Chevalier Crichton; slay him not," cried the duke, flinging himself from his steed. "Ha!" exclaimed he, as he regarded the motionless form of the prince, "you have destroyed the hopes of my brother of Mantua. By Saint Francis! you shall answer for the deed."

"If the prince is slain, he hath perished in the quarrel he himself provoked," replied Crichton sternly. "To yourself, my lord, or to others of his house, I will answer for what I have done."

"The prince, your nephew, has been fairly vanquished, my lord," said Joyeuse; "and the only felon stroke dealt during the combat was that by which yon bleeding charger was wounded."

"And that was accidental," said Crichton.

By this time the attendants had unclasped Vincenzo's helmet, and, though stunned and wounded by the concussion, his life was evidently not in danger. Satisfied with this examination, the duke became eager in his apologies to the Scot for the impatience he had exhibited; and his excuses being courteously accepted, he next directed his followers to remove the senseless body of the prince from the field. While this took place amid

the shouts of the spectators, and a loud flourish of trumpets, Crichton proceeded to the canopy occupied by the king, and prostrated himself before him. Henri greeted him with a smile, and raising him from the ground, passed many encomiums upon the bravery he had displayed.

"You have approved yourself a loyal and valiant knight, Chevalier Crichton," he said, "and have fully established the truth of the charge you brought yesternight against the traitor Ruggieri, whose guilt admits of no further justification. *Quia transivit in rem et judicatum, judicatum debet inviolabiliter observari*, as is appointed by the ordinance of our predecessor, the good King Philippe le Bel, respecting the judicial combat. *Par la Mort Dieu!* the Place de Grève shall blaze this night with his funeral pyre. Let him be removed to the Châtelet, and see whether the question will extract the truth from his lips."

"My gracious liege," said Crichton, "I crave a boon at your hands."

"Name it," replied the king; "if it refer not to one whom we will not name, it is yours, ere asked."

"Let the punishment to which you have condemned the traitor Ruggieri be commuted into perpetual exile."

"Do I hear you rightly?" asked Henri, in surprise.

"Grant me his life, sire, upon the terms I shall propose to him," continued Crichton.

"He is in your hands—deal with him as you see fitting," returned Henri. "Bring hither the traitor," he added, speaking to his attendants, "and let him now be confronted with his accuser."

And half dead with terror, the astrologer was dragged by his hooded attendants into the king's presence, amid the execrations of the spectators.

"Cosmo Ruggieri, thy guilt is fully approved," said Henri sternly. "Thy sentence, whether of death or banishment, rests with the Chevalier Crichton. It is with

him to pronounce thy doom. Down on thy knees, miscreant, and sue for grace. To me thou pleadest in vain."

Crichton approached the astrologer, who cast himself abjectly at his feet, embracing his knees, and striving to move his compassion with floods of tears. "Mercy," he cried, in a piteous tone.

"Thou wilt find none, unless thou provest obedient," replied Crichton; "arise and listen to me." And as Ruggieri obeyed, Crichton whispered in his ear the conditions upon which he might look for clemency. The astrologer started and trembled.

"I dare not," he said, after a moment's pause, during which he stole a troubled glance towards the gallery.

"To the rack with him," said Crichton.

The hooded officials instantly darted upon him like kites upon a carcase.

"Hold—hold!" cried Ruggieri; "I cannot brave that dreadful engine. I will do as you command me."

"Take him hence, then," commanded Crichton, "and let him remain with a sufficient guard within my pavilion until after the tourney."

"Your own lives shall answer for him," added Henri, as the astrologer was removed. "And now, *mon cher Crichton*," he added, "if you would effect the liberation of a captive princess from an enchanted castle, in which she is detained by magic arts, haste and equip yourself in fresh armour. Joyeuse will find you another steed in lieu of the one slain by the felon blow of your antagonist. Away, arm yourself, and join our ranks. And now, *messeigneurs*, for the *Châtel de la Joyeuse Garde*! What, oh! *Du Halde*—my horse—my gallant *Papillon*."

Crichton joyfully departed to array himself for this new encounter; while the king, mounting his snow-white Arabian, proceeded to superintend the preparations for the grand *estour*. As he rode across the arena, a billet was presented to him by a page in the livery of Catherine de Medicis. Henri knit his brow as he perused it.

"Peste!" he muttered, "am I ever to be a puppet in my mother's hands? By Saint Louis! this shall never be. And yet, all things considered, it may be better to concede this trifle. Du Halde," he added, beckoning to the chief valet, and speaking in an undertone—"get thee to Crichton's pavilion, and contrive some means for Ruggieri's instant escape. We desire not to be known in this matter. Thou understandest?—about it quickly."

Du Halde departed on his mission, and Henri, turning to his courtiers, with a smile that but ill concealed his mortification, said: "It is our mother's pleasure, messeigneurs, that the grand mêlée be deferred till night. The defence of the châtel will, therefore, take place, as at first designed, by torchlight. Joyeuse, do thou give orders to this effect. Her majesty hath desired instant speech with us—on affairs of state," he added, in a sarcastic tone, "we presume. No matter—after our conference, which we shall certainly not prolong, it is our intention to essay a course with this preux Scottish knight, in honour of our fair Queen of the Lists."

With this, the monarch pressed forward, and dismounting from his charger, entered the royal gallery.

V

The Pavilion.

"La reine vouloit persuader que ce pauvre prince, son fils, avait conspiré afin de le rendre odieux à chacun."—HENRI ETIENNE: *Discours Merveilleux*.

WHEN the armourer had completed his office, and Crichton, attired in a magnificent suit of russet-coloured mail sent him by the Vicomte de Joyeuse, was about to place his plumed casque upon his brow

and return to the tilt-yard, a page in the royal livery suddenly appeared at the entrance of the pavilion, and announced the queen-mother. Ere the Scot could recover from the astonishment into which he was thrown by this unlooked-for visit, Catherine stood before him.

"My presence occasions you surprise, messire," said the queen, with a gracious salutation, which Crichton haughtily returned, "nor will that surprise be diminished when you learn the motive that has brought us hither."

"To whatever motive I must attribute your majesty's present condescension," returned Crichton coldly, "I am well aware, from your smiles, that some new danger is to be apprehended."

"You wrong me by your doubts, Chevalier Crichton," rejoined Catherine, in a tone of great courtesy, and apparent candour; "my enmity to you exists no longer. In vanquishing Gonzaga you have vanquished me. I am here to acknowledge my defeat; and I am assured that your nature is too chivalrous to refuse mercy to a prostrate foe."

"Your majesty forgets our interview last night," said Crichton, regarding the queen distrustfully, "and the Machiavelian precepts with which you unintentionally favoured me. Need I remind you that 'words are the cloak 'neath which the sword is hidden;' need I add that, under your present fair professions, I discern a dark and deadly purpose? Your majesty is no prostrate foe. And it is for me—not for yourself—to sue for clemency."

"You have nothing more to apprehend from me, messire," said Catherine, a slight shade passing across her majestic features, "unless, indeed, you wantonly provoke my resentment. I pledge my royal word that I am come hither to confer with you in amity."

"That royal word was plighted to the brave and trusting Coligni," rejoined Crichton; "how it was kept, the gory gibbet of Montfaucon best can answer."

"Grant me patience, Heaven!" exclaimed Catherine, in an altered voice. "You will not, then, accept my assurance of friendship?"

"No, by the Saint Barthélemy, madame," answered Crichton sternly.

Catherine's quivering lip proclaimed the struggle she underwent to repress her almost uncontrollable indignation. Skilled, however, in the mastery of her emotions, she did instantaneously repress it; and waving her hand to the attendants, who had withdrawn to the outlet of the tent at her approach, she was left alone with the Scot.

"Chevalier Crichton," she said, in a deep, low tone, "you are brave—but your bravery amounts to folly. Of what avail are these idle taunts? We understand each other."

"We do, madame," replied the Scot.

"And with this understanding, why should we not act in unison? Our interests require it. As friend or foe, our purposes are so indissolubly connected, that to separate one were to destroy the other. So far you have succeeded. You are in a position to make terms with me. Propose them. Let not your ambition dread too high a flight. You have boasted that your ancestry is noble—regal——"

"The blood of the Stuarts flows in my veins," said Crichton proudly.

"If I have heard aright, your sire is——"

"Sir Robert Crichton, my father, is sole advocate to James of Scotland," interrupted Crichton. "Our religious opinions are at variance, or I had never quitted my native land."

"You did ill to leave it in its season of calamity," said Catherine, "a prey to heresy and rebellion. One hand like yours, one voice potent as your own, might have availed to check, if not avert, this widely devastating storm. Your energies would, indeed, have

been beneficially displayed in crushing that serpent brood which the pernicious zeal of the fanatic Knox has called into life. Had the tocsin of Saint Barthélemy been rung from the towers of Edinburgh Castle; had our gentle daughter Mary dealt with her ruthless foes as we have dealt with the enemies of our faith, she would not now have been a captive to Elizabeth. Chevalier Crichton, your lovely queen weeps away her hours in prison. It should have been your aim, as a faithful Catholic and loyal subject, to have effected her liberation."

"You have, unwittingly, touched upon a chord that vibrates through my heart, madame," said the Scot, his colour mounting, and his glances kindling, as he spoke. "To rescue my beloved queen from her oppressors, I would willingly lay down my life—nay, a thousand lives, if I possessed them! If her guard were thrice in number what it is—her prison yet more inaccessible—if she were lodged within the palace of her rival—or immured in London's impregnable tower, I would accomplish her deliverance, or perish in the attempt, did not an awful bar prevent me."

"What bar?" demanded Catherine, with some appearance of curiosity.

"A father's malediction!" replied Crichton, with a sudden change of tone. "Your majesty has spoken of the devastation which heresy has spread throughout my unhappy land. Her temples have been desecrated, the fire that burnt upon her ancient altars has been extinguished, her reverend priests have been driven forth; but this is not all. Into the bosom of her families these new doctrines have brought fierce and bitter dissension. Irreconcilable hatred has sprung up where love before existed. My sire (alas! that it should be so) has embraced the Reformed Faith. I have remained constant to the creed of my ancestry—to the creed of my conviction; and in behalf of that

religion, in the cause of my injured queen, I should have taken up arms, when I was of years to bear them, had not my sire placed between my sword and the hand that would have grasped it—his curse. With a father's malediction hanging over my head, I could not hope for success. Without a struggle I resigned the first, the dearest wish of my dawning life. In vain were prospects of ambition, clouded with heresy and stained by rebellion, opened to me. In vain were proffers made me by those who would have purchased my services. I left my country, for whose weal I would have gladly bled—I quitted my paternal halls, to which a thousand tender recollections bound me—I vowed never to return to that country—never again to behold that home, till the schism of the one should be annihilated—the old rites of worship, once observed by the other, restored.”

“You will never, then, see Scotland more,” said Catherine. “She will cling to her false faith, as a libertine to the leman whose arts have ensnared him.”

“Or, as her preachers affirm,” rejoined Crichton, in a tone of scorn, “she is like the profligate who has abandoned the mistress and assumed the wife. But your majesty is right. Scotland will know no change. The homely creed she has adopted suits her homely people well. Austere in feeling as in manner, they will become hardened in heresy. The dogma promulgated by Knox—*plebis est religionem reformare*—roused the whole nation. The people have reformed their faith, and their creed is essentially plebeian. Stripped of its ornaments; robbed of its majesty and grace; its magnificent proportions, sculptured and reared by ages, destroyed; its venerable and hoary colouring, which time alone could impart, effaced; its odours scattered to the breezes; its traditions forgotten or despised; the worship of my country, simple, naked, and, it may be, pure, no more resembles

its ancient grandeur and sublimity than the lowly temple of the Huguenot will bear comparison with the glorious edifice of Nôtre-Dame. A cathedral is religion. Who can enter its reverend aisles unmoved? Who can gaze upwards to its vaulted roof with thoughts that stray not heavenward? Mine be the antique fane—mine the time-honoured creed. Mine be the saint, the shrine, the solemn and melodious mass—mine the faith picturesque, poetical, beautiful. My native land I may never behold again—my father's blessing I may never receive—but the religion of Rome, entwined around my heart, endeared to me, even by persecution, I will ever maintain."

"I applaud your zeal, messire," said Catherine. "To the brave man, the soil he treads is his country. Be France the land of your adoption. Her faith is yet unchanged. Heaven grant it may continue so! The storm we have swept away is again gathering with increased power and fury. Lend us your assistance to dispel it—to uphold the religion so dear to you. In the reign of the Seventh Charles who swayed the sceptre of this fair kingdom, one of your countrymen was, for his bravery displayed in the well-fought field of Beaugé, in Anjou, when the royal Clarence fell by his hand, created Constable of France—why should not a like dignity be yours?"

"Were such unhoped-for distinction mine, madame," said Crichton, smiling, "I should not be the first of my line who has been similarly graced. The valiant Earl of Buchan, the countryman to whom your majesty refers, by whose proud achievement the field of Beaugé was won, and by whom the baton of France was thenceforth borne, was (I hesitate not to proclaim it) my ancestor."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the wily queen, with well-feigned surprise. "Valour, it seems, is your inheritance. I rejoice to learn that you are a descendant

of bold John of Buchan, whose chivalrous deeds my consort, Henry the Second, has so often rehearsed to me. Why, I again ask, should you not tread in the steps of your ancestor? Why should not your hand grasp the marshal's baton? Why should not your voice lead on the chivalry of France to conquest? Why should not your vigilance maintain her ancient faith unsullied?"

Crichton returned no answer. His countenance glowed, and his frame dilated, as Catherine, not insensible of the impression she had produced, continued: "Why should you not aspire to the hand of the fairest princess of her time? Why should not the lovely Esclairmonde be yours?"

"No more, I pray you, madame—tempt me not."

"Graced with the rank of marshal—allied to the royal house of Condé—enriched with the dowry which your bride will bring—would not even your ambition be contented?"

"Even in my wildest dreams my aspirations never soared so high," ejaculated Crichton—"a marshal of France?"

"Her leader!" said Catherine.

"That baton in my grasp which Bertrand du Guesclin, Olivier de Clisson, and the brave Boucicart bore—which Gaston de Foix, Brissac, and Montmorency wielded—that baton mine!"

"The legions of France beneath your command," added Catherine.

"Her legions!" echoed Crichton—"ha! Saint Andrew! I see them rise round me! I see her fierce and fiery bands pour like a tide upon the plain. I see her chivalry arrayed before me—that peerless chivalry which Bayard led—ha; Montjoie! St. Denis—methinks I hear their battle-cry."

"Be Bayard's fortune yours."

"Bayard was reproachless, madame," returned the

Scot, the glow which had lighted up his features suddenly fading away ; "the name of Crichton shall be equally so."

"Your name shall not be stained, messire," said Catherine impatiently ; "but, in your dreams of ambition, you have forgotten—what we should least have expected you to forget—your tender aspirations."

"Esclairmonde !" exclaimed Crichton.

"Say rather the Princess of Condé," rejoined Catherine, "for her rank will speedily be acknowledged."

"Will you acknowledge it, madame ?" demanded Crichton eagerly.

"At my own pleasure," returned the queen coldly. "Question not—but listen. The baton of France, the hand of the Princess of Condé, are yours—on certain conditions."

"Hell hath her compacts," muttered Crichton ; "and men have bartered their eternal weal for lighter offers. Your conditions, madame ?"

"Have I your knightly word, that whether or not you accept the terms I am about to propose, your lips shall reveal no syllable I may utter ?"

Crichton appeared lost in reflection.

"Have I your word ?" repeated Catherine.

"You have, madame," returned the Scot.

"I trust you with my life, then—for I am well assured, that once plighted, you will not break that word."

"Your majesty may speak as to your confessor——"

"My confessor !" echoed Catherine derisively. "Think you I would entrust a secret—the betrayal of which would fill our city of Paris with scaffolds, would float her streets with blood, would crowd the dungeons of her Bastile and the oubliettes of her Châtelets with noble prisoners—to a crafty priest ? No ! there are secrets which must not even be breathed to Heaven. Ours is one of them"

"And crimes too deep to be forgiven," said Crichton gloomily. "Heaven grant your majesty propose not such."

"Be patient, messire," returned the queen, "and you shall hear what I do propose. You are already (no matter how!) in possession of my plans. I need not, therefore, tell you of my project for Henri's dethronement—of my scheme to place his crown upon the Duc d'Anjou's head."

"Thus much I know, madame," said Crichton.

"But you are not aware," continued Catherine, approaching more nearly to the Scot, and lowering her tone, "that Anjou is now in Paris."

"Within this city!—ha!"

"Within the Louvre—within the palace soon to be his own."

"Great Heaven!"

"Bussy d'Amboise, his favourite, has this morning arrived from Flanders. All goes well for us. We have the gold of Spain—the swords of Switzerland and Scotland—for the guards are ours. Our thousand agents, our spies and emissaries are at work. They thread each quarter of the city. Our partisans collect together, and only await the signal to declare themselves. That signal will be given to-night."

"So soon!"

"Ay, so soon," reiterated Catherine triumphantly. "Nostradamus foretold that all my sons should be kings. To-morrow his prediction will be verified."

"And Henri?"

Catherine grew pale as death, and trembled so violently, that she was compelled to lay her hand for support upon Crichton's armed shoulder.

"What of the king, your son, madame?" continued the Scot sternly.

"Of all my sons," exclaimed the queen, with a look of deep agony, and, it might be, compunction, "Henri

hath ever been the most dear to me. The sickly François, the rugged Charles, found no place in my heart. But Henri, the fond, the pliant, the winning; Henri, ever devoted, ever deferential to my will; Henri, the graceful, the polished, the beautiful—whom nature intended for a king, and for whom I have seconded nature's intentions—he has ever been my favourite."

"And you will now destroy your own work; you will sacrifice your favourite son?"

"My safety requires it," returned Catherine, sighing deeply. "Henri has of late grown wayward and capricious. He refuses to follow my counsels—to acknowledge my sway. His minions have supplanted me in his esteem. Saint-Luc, Joyeuse, D'Epéron rule where I was wont to govern. The Salic law prevents the exercise of sovereign authority in my own person. I reign through my sons; if not through Henri, I must reign through François."

"Weighed against a love of power, a mother's love is nothing," said Crichton.

"Against high resolves it should be nothing," returned Catherine; "against Fate it is nothing. Of what avail is my tenderness for Henri, of what avail are my regrets for his defection, of what avail is this hesitation to pronounce his doom? Chevalier Crichton," she continued, in a voice that froze the Scot's blood within his veins, "he must die!"

There was a terrible pause, during which each regarded the other fixedly.

"Horror!" exclaimed Crichton, at length recovering his speech; "can a mother say this?"

"Hear me!" cried Catherine, "and learn with whom you have to deal—learn and tremble! By blood—my own blood, was my power obtained; by blood—my own blood, must it be maintained. Henri must die."

"By the hand that reared him?"

"No! mine might falter. I will find a surer arm

to deal the blow. Listen," she continued, becoming perfectly calm; "by midnight all will be in readiness. Under various pretexts, and in various disguises, the leaders of Anjou's faction will, ere that hour arrives, have been introduced into the Louvre. Bussy d'Amboise has his own quarrel to avenge upon the king's favourites. His sword hath seldom failed him. He will deal with Joyeuse, D'Epernon, and Saint-Luc. The Duc de Nevers is ours already. Villequier and D'O. are vanes that will shift with the wind. Henri alone remains—and he——"

"Well, madame?"

"Is reserved for your hand."

"For MINE!"

"I have prevailed upon him to defer the grand chivalrous emprise in which he takes part till midnight. Amid the conflict his lance will seek yours. Couch then your sharpened spear—cry 'Live François the Third,' and strike! I know too well the force of your arm to doubt the fatal issue of the blow. That cry—that deadly stroke will be the signal to Anjou—and to our party. They will respond to it. Henri's adherents will be exterminated—his crown will be his brother's."

"From the scene of carnage you depict, madame," said Crichton, "my mind flies back to days gone by—to the fair month of June 1559. Before the palace of the Tournelles, a splendid tournament is set forth to celebrate the nuptials of Elizabeth of France with Philip of Spain. A chivalrous monarch maintains the passage of arms against all comers. That monarch is your husband. That monarch is Henry the Second."

"No more—no more."

"That monarch demands a favour from his queen. Her scarf is sent him. He places it upon his corslet. He calls to the Earl of Montgomery to place his lance in rest. The earl obeys him. The combatants rush



The Pavilion.



upon each other. The lance of Montgomery is broken——”

“Hold! I command you, messire.”

“But a splinter hath pierced the brain of the ill-fated king,” continued Crichton, heedless of Catherine’s frowns. “He falls mortally wounded. You witnessed this fearful catastrophe, madame. You saw your husband hurled bleeding to the earth—and to a like fate you would now condemn your son—his son!”

“Have you yet done?”

“Think you I am an assassin, madame, that you propose to me a deed from which even the ruthless bravo of your native Italy would shrink aghast?”

“If I propose a deed dark and terrible, I offer a proportionate reward,” returned Catherine. “Stay!” she continued, drawing from her escarcelle a small roll of parchment, to which a broad seal was appended, “here is your appointment.”

“It bears date to-morrow.”

“It will be ratified to-night,” rejoined the queen, placing the document upon a tapestry-covered table which stood beside them. “Behold the royal signet—behold your title as Marshal of France! Your answer?”

“Is this,” replied Crichton, suddenly drawing his poignard, and striking it through the parchment with such force that all trace of his name was effectually obliterated.

“Enough!” exclaimed Catherine, tearing the mutilated document from the board. “You shall learn anon whose wrath you have provoked.”

“Threat for threat, madame,” returned the undaunted Scot. “You may find in me a formidable enemy.”

“Ha!” ejaculated the queen, pausing, “you will not betray my confidence? Your word is passed.”

“It is,” replied Crichton; “but your majesty forgets that Ruggieri is in my power.”

Catherine smiled.

"Ruggieri will betray nothing," she said.

"He has sworn to reveal all on condition that his life be spared," returned Crichton.

Catherine's brow darkened for an instant; but the same sinister smile still played around her lips.

"If my astrologer be your sole instrument of offence, messire," she said, "I have little to apprehend."

"Your majesty is confident," rejoined Crichton. "What if I tell you that the packet containing the proofs of the Princess Esclairmonde's birth is found?—what if I add that your own letters to the Duc d'Anjou—your despatches to the Prince Vincenzo di Gonzaga, are now on their way to the king?"

"And if I answer—it is false!—false as your assertion that Ruggieri will betray me? That packet will never reach the king. That packet is in my possession. The Huguenot preacher, who was to have conveyed it to Henri, is my prisoner."

"The powers of darkness have not deserted your majesty, I perceive," said Crichton, with a look of astonishment.

"Nor those of earth," retorted Catherine, clapping her hands. "Let Ruggieri be brought before us," she added, as the attendants appeared.

The men betrayed evident symptoms of alarm, and one of them stammered out something like an excuse.

"How is this?" demanded Crichton. "Have you dared to disobey his majesty's commands?—have you suffered your prisoner to escape?"

At this moment two of the hooded officials entered the pavilion.

"Where is the astrologer?—answer on your lives?" said Crichton.

"We are come to seek him here, monseigneur," said the foremost of the train.

"Here!" echoed Crichton furiously,

"Yes, monseigneur," returned the man; "we had no sooner placed him in the guard-room, than he disappeared—we know not how or where; and we thought he was as likely to be here, as in any other place."

"I recognise your hand in this, madame," said the Scot, turning to Catherine.

The queen replied, with a bitter smile, "The powers of darkness have not yet deserted us, you perceive, messire."

"The other prisoner, however, is safe enough," said the foremost official, as he drew back.

"What prisoner?" demanded Crichton eagerly.

"The heretic preacher," returned the man. "He is at hand if you wish to interrogate him." And without waiting for the Scot's reply, he motioned to his comrade, who, in his turn, motioned to some one without; and the curtain of the tent being drawn aside, with his arms bound with cords, and his whole appearance betokening great personal suffering from ill-usage, the venerable Florent Chrétien was dragged into the pavilion.

"His companion, the Englishman, escaped us," interposed the official, who acted as spokesman, "owing to a fiend in the form of a dog, with fangs like a wolf, who fought by his side, and covered his flight. But he cannot have passed the gates of the Louvre, and we may yet secure him." Crichton was about to rush to the assistance of the captive preacher to free him from his bondage, but a look from the old man restrained him.

"It is in vain, my son," said Chrétien; "do not draw down your blood likewise upon my head."

"The packet?" demanded Crichton, with frantic eagerness; "say it has not fallen into the hands of this remorseless queen—say that you have given it to

the Englishman Blount—say that he hastens with it to the king—say there is yet hope.”

“Alas! my son, why should I deceive you? My mission hath failed. Our enemies triumph. They have pursued me sore. Like a bird I have fallen into their snare. The precious casket hath been stolen from me. There is no hope save from on high.”

“Heaven will work no miracle in thy behalf, rank heretic that thou art,” said Catherine; “the populace, robbed of the spectacle they anticipated in Ruggieri’s execution by fire, will need a victim. They shall have one. The stake shall not have been planted, nor the fagots piled within the *Pré-aux-Clercs*, in vain. Abjure thine heresies, old man. Make thy peace above. Thy sentence is pronounced.”

“I desire no better end,” replied Chrétien; “my death shall be a testimony to the faithful.”

“Your fanatic zeal blinds you, good father,” said Crichton; “forsake your errors while there is yet time.”

“Forsake them!” echoed the preacher, with fervour; “never! Flames may consume my breathing body. Torture may rend my limbs asunder. But my lips shall never gainsay my heart. For a death like this, my whole life hath been a preparation. I am not taken by surprise. My house is set in order. I shall glory in my martyrdom. I shall rejoice to be numbered with the righteous, who have perished in the service of their God. It is thou, my son, who art in error. It is thou who art blinded and perverse. It is thou who art in danger of unquenchable flame. Let my words dwell with thee—let my spirit be upon thee. So shall I not die in vain; so shall thine own end be happy—be joyful as mine. Thou hast called me father—as a father I bestow my blessing upon thee.”

“As a father—O God!” exclaimed Crichton, his eyes filling with emotion, and his voice faltering.

"Kneel down, my son; an old man's benediction, whatever may be his creed, cannot injure you."¹

Crichton instantly threw himself at the preacher's feet.

"Heaven's grace descend upon your head, my son," said Chrétien, bending over him; "and may the dawning of a new light from henceforth break upon your soul!"

"My soul will never swerve from its fixed bias," replied Crichton, as he arose from the benediction. "I admire your constancy; but my faith is changeless as your own. I shall be no apostate."

"*Video meliora, proboque, deteriora sequor*," sighed the old man—"ah, my son, you are stubborn in unbelief. But my prayers will not be unheard, and your name, together with that of one dear to you as to myself, shall mingle with my latest breath. I shall expire in the hope of your spiritual regeneration. For thee, perfidious and bloody-minded woman," he continued, turning to Catherine, and regarding her with a terrible look, "a day of dreadful retribution is at hand. Thy portion shall be that of the idolatrous Queen of Judah. Evil shall be brought upon thee and shame. Thy posterity shall be utterly taken away. With blood hast thou polluted this city; and with thy own blood shall it be cleansed. 'Vengeance is mine,' saith the Lord, 'and I will repay.'"

"Peace, blasphemer," interrupted the queen, "and learn to thy confusion, that if the arm of Heaven hath been manifested at all, it hath this day been declared in favour of the religion thou deridest. The leader upon whom the reliance of your miserable sect is placed—our chief enemy—hath been delivered into our hands. Ha! thou tremblest—have I found a way to shake thy inflexible spirit?"

"It cannot be!" exclaimed Chrétien, with a despairing look.

¹ These, or nearly these words, were addressed by the Pope Benedict the Fourteenth to Horace Walpole.

"It is," returned Catherine triumphantly; "we hold thy chieftain within our toils."

"Ah, fatal rashness!" cried Chrétien bitterly; "but I will not murmur against the decrees of Providence. I pray your majesty to send me forth, I am very faint."

"Take him hence," said Catherine, "and let it be proclaimed by sound of trumpet in each quarter of our faithful and Catholic city, that a Huguenot minister will be put to death by fire at midnight within the Pré-aux-Cleres. Let the ecclesiastical authorities receive instant intimation to attend. Here is your warrant," she added, delivering a written paper to the official.

"Your majesty hath delivered me the wrong order," said the official, glancing at the superscription of the scroll; "this is a warrant for the execution of Cosmo Ruggieri, Abbé of Saint Mahé, convicted of the crimes of lèse-majesté and sorcery."

"It will suffice," returned the queen imperiously; "remove your prisoner."

Chrétien dropped upon his knees.

"How long, O Lord, holy and true," cried he, gazing earnestly towards heaven, "dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?" And with these words his reverend head declined upon his breast, while, supported by the two officials, he was borne out of the pavilion.

"Your majesty, indeed, is an inexorable enemy," said Crichton, gazing after the unfortunate preacher, with looks of the deepest commiseration.

"And as unalterable a friend," returned the queen; "it is for you now to determine, Chevalier Crichton, in which light I must henceforth be viewed. A word ere we part. In Henri you have a rival. He loves the Princess Esclairmonde."

"I know it, madame——"

"To-night she is his, or yours."

"His she shall never be"

"Then you accept my terms?"

At this moment the loud blast of a bugle was heard sounding from the farther end of the tilt-yard.

"A knightly challenge!" exclaimed Crichton, listening for a repetition of the notes.

"A kingly challenge!" returned Catherine; "that trumpet blast is the defiance of Henri of Navarre."

"Henri of Navarre!" echoed Crichton, in astonishment. "He, then, is the Huguenot leader whom fate hath delivered into your hands?"

"He is," replied Catherine. "I am indebted to chance for this important discovery. One of my demoiselles, La Rebours, as she rode to the Louvre, was struck with the resemblance of a soldier in the train of the Baron de Rosni to Henri de Bourbon. The circumstance was casually alluded to in my hearing. My suspicions were at once aroused. Spies were instantly put upon the scent, and I found that the soldier was the monarch in masquerade. The secret must rest between ourselves, messire."

"Fear nothing, madame," answered the Scot, "my lips are sealed."

"I learnt also, that this foolhardy king was about to attend the jousts held at the Louvre, for the express purpose of breaking a lance with you."

"With me, madame?"

"Your renown as an expert tilter has, I conclude, reached his ears, and he is resolved to put it to the proof. But hark! his trumpet sounds for the second time. This conference must be brought to a close. Your answer to my proposal?"

"It shall be delivered after the jousts."

"Our confidence in the meantime——"

"Shall be held sacred. I swear it."

"Enough—after the jousts I shall expect you within the royal gallery. Place your hand, as if by accident, upon your poignard when you approach me. From

the gesture I shall infer that you assent. *Dieu vous garde ! messire.*" So saying, Catherine summoned her attendants and quitted the pavilion.

"What ho ! my lance—my steed," shouted Crichton, snatching his helmet from the armourer, who had promptly answered his call—"ha ! Saint Andrew, my gorget, my gauntlets ! By Heaven !" he murmured, "to cross a lance with the bravest prince in Christendom were reward enough for a thousand risks. Our Lady aid me in this essay !"

In another instant his equipments were completed, and, vaulting upon his steed, the Scot dashed through the entrance of the lists.

No sooner was the coast clear, than from beneath the tapestry-covered table, which stood in the middle of the tent, emerged first a long conical cap—then a fantastic visage in which drollery was strangely mixed up with apprehension—and lastly the odd-shaped parti-coloured person of Chicot—his teeth chattering and his limbs shaking.

"*Sang de cabres !*" he cried, after casting an anxious glance around. "I have stolen here to some purpose. Pretty revelations I have heard. A conspiracy on the eve of breaking forth !—our dear Henriot about to be transfixed with a lance as his father was transfixed before him. Had it been the cloister to which he was condemned, I should not have cared—he had always a taste for the frock—but assassination ! *Cornes de diable !* I am horror-stricken. Old Buridan was in the right to propound his sophism, '*Reginam interficere nolite timere bonum esse.*' It would be a praiseworthy act to put Queen Catherine out of the way. But Buridan's theories are out of fashion even in the Sorbonne. What is to be done ? Luckily I have made no vow not to betray her majesty's confidence—and if I had, on an occasion like the present I should not scruple to break it. What is to be done ? I ask

myself that question for the second time. I am sorely perplexed. Who will believe my tale? I shall be laughed at—cuffed—perhaps be put out of the way myself—the common fate of meddlers. I have it. I will abide the issue of the jousts, and then confer with this Scot—for I can guess what answer he means to give our Jezebel. How runs the pasquil?

"Twixt Catherine and Jezebel
 The difference is small—
 The one the plague of Israel,
 The other the plague of Gaul.
 But if the fate of Jezebel
 Our Catherine should befall,
 The very dogs would (mark me well!)
 Refuse to eat at all."¹

And, muttering these scurrilous strains as he went, the jester crept cautiously out of the pavilion.

VI

The Béarnais.

"Que direz-vous fâcheux maris, de cette souffrance? N'aurez-vous point de peur, que vos femmes vous laissant pour venir à moi? ou n'estimerez-vous point plutôt que ce fût quelque lâcheté."
 —*Divorce Satirique.*

As Crichton rode into the tilt-yard, he found Henri, encircled by his favourites, impatiently awaiting his return, and speculating upon the haughty defiance with which the walls of the Louvre yet resounded.

"Away, Montjoie — away, messieurs," cried the monarch, addressing the king-of-arms and the heralds;

¹ From a bitter pasquinade in the Journal of Henri Trois, entitled "Comparaison de Catherine et de Jezebel."

"do your devoir quickly, and bring us word what hardy champion dares to intrude within our lists. Par la Mort-Dieu ! it would seem we hold a free passage of arms, and not private jousts. But this adventurer, whoever he may be, shall rue his temerity. Away ! and let us know his title and condition. Ha ! you are come," he added, as the Scot drew in the rein by his side—"we shall question you anon, messire, as to the nature of your interminable conference with our mother. We suspect from your looks that you have been hatching some treason against us. Is it so ?"

"Sire !" exclaimed Crichton, reddening.

"By our faith, your interview hath made you serious since you thus resent our jest," said the king, smiling ; "and no wonder—for, certes, a tête-à-tête of any duration with her majesty the queen-mother is no laughing matter, even to ourself. However, upon the present occasion we ought to thank, rather than chide you, for detaining her so long, as her absence has enabled us to lay closer siege to her lovely demoiselle than we should have cared to do in her presence. Apropos of the fair Esclairmonde, Chevalier Crichton, so soon as we have disposed of this unknown challenger, it is our intention to splinter a lance with you in her honour. We have no fears of your disloyalty, you see, or we should not thus heedlessly place our life at your disposal."

"Be warned, sire !" said a deep voice, "and run no course to-day."

Henri started.

"Who speaks ?" he ejaculated, turning with some misgiving in the supposed direction of the sound. His looks of inquiry fell upon the frank countenance of the Vicomte de Joyeuse, which was charged with as much astonishment as his own.

"Remember your father's fate !" exclaimed the

same deep voice, now appearing to sound from a different quarter—"beware!"

"Sang-dieu," vociferated the king furiously. "Who dares thus address us? Let him stand forth."

But no answer was returned; nor was any movement made in obedience to Henri's mandate.

The courtiers eyed each other with glances of suspicion. No one, however, could tax his neighbour with having uttered the ominous words.

"Jesus!" exclaimed Henri, in a tone of some uneasiness, at the same time secretly crossing himself, "that voice recalls our idle terrors of last night. But there can be no sarbacane upon the present occasion."

"Vive-dieu! no, sire," cried Joyeuse, springing to the king's side. "But there may be other artifice."

"It may be well not to neglect the caution, my gracious liege," said Saint-Luc, who was almost as superstitious as his sovereign. "Charles le Bien-Aimé had his warning."

"And our ill-fated father, likewise," mused the king.

"Your majesty will not suffer yourself to be deterred from entering the jousts by this imposture," said Joyeuse. "Were I in your place, sire, I would show my contempt for this hidden traitor's counsel, by seizing a lance, and proceeding at once to the barriers."

"Joyeuse is in the right," said the Duc de Nevers, with a singular smile; "it were an impeachment of the Chevalier Crichton's loyalty to refuse him, upon such light grounds, the honour of a career with your majesty."

"It is an honour which I have not sought, monsieur le Duc," returned Crichton sternly; "and I pray you to remember that the stroke by which Henry the Second fell was accidental."

"Speak not of it, mon cher," said the king, shuddering.

"Servans d'amours regardez doucement,
Aux eschaffaux anges de paradis——"

sang Joyeuse, anxious to reassure the pusillanimous monarch. "Think of the bright eyes that will watch your prowess, sire ; think of the belle Esclairmonde."

Henri glanced towards the grand gallery ; he there beheld the fair Princess of Condé, the "cynosure of neighbouring eyes," and his fears instantly vanished.

"Thou hast restored us, my brother," he said to the vicomte. "We will think of the mistress of our heart. Were it to be our last career, we would no longer hesitate."

"It will be your last," said the deep voice, sounding yet more hollowly.

"Ha !" ejaculated Henri, relapsing into all his former terrors—"that voice again ! This passeth a jest, if a jest be intended ; and though we pardoned our buffoon Chicot's effrontery last night, think not we will tolerate similar freedom to-day. Look to it, messeigneurs, and let our hidden monitor, who lacketh the courage to discover himself, in his turn beware."

"Methinks your hidden counsellor displays more courage and forbearance in concealing himself," said Crichton, "than he would do were he to obey your mandate. He can have nothing to apprehend from your majesty."

At this moment, and while the utmost confusion prevailed amid the royal group, to Henri's infinite relief Montjoie and his attendant heralds returned. "Heaven be praised !" exclaimed the king ; "if I am to be kept in the dark respecting this mysterious warning, my curiosity will, at all events, be gratified on another point of equal interest. Thou art welcome, Montjoie. Thy news !—the name and condition of this hardy adventurer ? Yet hold ! Ere thou speakest, I will

wager this string of pearls against the knot of ribands that flutters on the Chevalier Crichton's helm, that this champion is the Balafre."

"I accept your wager, sire," said Crichton. "Favour against favour."

"Decide, Montjoie," said Henri.

"Your majesty is the loser," returned the king-of-arms; "it is not the Duc de Guise."

"Diantre!" exclaimed Henri, reluctantly yielding the gage to Crichton; "you are ever fortunate. It were in vain to contend with one upon whom the capricious goddess constantly smiles."

"Certes, your majesty has lost a talisman which more than tempered steel would have been proof against my lance," rejoined the Scot, joyfully unhelming himself, and attaching the string of pearls to his casque.

Executed with consummate grace, this slight action was not unobserved by the fair princess by whom the ornament had been worn. Her situation enabled her to command the whole scene, and she witnessed with surprise the inexplicable conduct of the king towards his rival. Her astonishment was, however, speedily changed into admiration and delight as she beheld her lover's employment; and as she gazed upon his proud head, now divested of all covering save that afforded by his fair and flowing tresses; as she looked upon his stately and snow-white throat springing from out his "habiliments of war," like the moulded neck of Antinous; as she listened to the unrestrained praises of the dames by whom she was surrounded, and the louder plaudits of the admiring multitude; and as she finally encountered his enamoured gaze, and felt that he to whom all this homage was paid rendered homage alone to her—shall we injure her in the esteem of the fair reader if we say that something of self-elation mingled with her tenderer emotions? As Crichton

replaced his bourginot upon his brow, she waved her hand, and her salutation was instantly acknowledged by the Scot with a look and gesture of the deepest devotion. Henri, meantime, turning to Montjoie, continued his interrogations respecting the strange knight.

"As permitted by the laws of chivalry, my liege," returned Montjoie, in answer to the king's inquiry, "this champion claims to be exempted from the disclosure of his name."

"And thou hast recognised his right to do so, we will be sworn?" said Henri, in a petulant tone.

"In the due discharge of mine office, as your majesty's representative in the court of arms, I could not do otherwise," returned Montjoie.

"You have done well, sir," said the king, frowning.

"I have fulfilled my duty, sire," returned Montjoie bluntly. "Your father, Henry the Second, of glorious memory, would not have thus rebuked me."

"Nor will his son," returned Henri kindly; "your pardon, my old and loyal servant. What title has this knight inscribed upon your rolls?"

"A strange one, sire—the Béarnais."

"The Béarnais!" exclaimed Henri, in surprise; "this is some mockery. There is but one champion in Europe who has a right to that title; and he is not so much in want of warlike pastime, or so foolhardy, as to venture hither in quest of knightly adventures."

"The cavalier is, perchance, one of the King of Navarre's valiant captains, who has, for the nonce, usurped his sovereign's title," returned Montjoie—"it may be Chatillon, or D'Aubigné."

"Is he unattended?" demanded Henri.

"No, my liege," answered Montjoie; "his companion is the King of Navarre's envoy, Maximilian de Bethunes, Baron de Rosni."

"Ah! the Polydor of our cousin Alcandre," said the king, smiling.

"And the husband of the fair Dioclée," observed Joyeuse significantly.

"Madame de Rosni is still alive, I believe, though her husband threatened her with the dagger and the bowl, when he discovered her inconstancy with Henri of Navarre—eh! marquis?" said Saint-Luc, addressing Villequier.

This was a home thrust. The Governor of Paris, a few years back, had slain his first wife, Françoise de la Marck, for a like fault.¹ He endeavoured, however, to parry the stroke.

"The Baron de Rosni is a base and contented wittol," he said, with a sneer, "and merits his fate. Fortunate are they who possess spouses sufficiently ill-favoured to ensure their safety."

The laugh was now on the governor's side, for the baroness (as we have before remarked) was the plainest woman of her time.

Saint-Luc was about to make an angry retort to Villequier's raillery, but his petulance was checked by the king.

"No more of this, messeigneurs," said Henri; "here comes the Baron de Rosni and his unknown companion. I pray you observe them closely."

And as he spoke, two knights completely armed, and each followed by an esquire bearing his shield and lance, entered the champ clos. The foremost of the twain, whose stature, originally large, was materially increased in bulk by the ponderous plates of steel in which his limbs were cased, was mounted on a fiery jet-black barb, which required the utmost efforts of his rider's powerful arm to restrain his impatience. The visor of the knight was closed, and through its narrow bars not even the flashing of an eye could be discerned. One uniform ruddy tint pervaded his equipments. From

¹ Cruentus sanguine uxoris, Pictavii ob impropertatam sibi propudiosam vitam interfectæ.—*Thuanus*.

salade to solleret, his harness was crimson-coloured. His panache of ostrich plumes—"longs et haulx," the sweeping caparisons of his charger, the feathered tufts that nodded on the chamfrin and croup of the lordly animal, the shield and battle-axe that hung at his saddle-bow, were all of the same sanguine hue.

Behind this champion, who, it is needless to say, was Henri of Navarre, rode an esquire in livery of similar complexion, bearing in his right hand a lance, on the point of which fluttered a small silken pennon, and on his left arm a buckler, painted with the simple flower so exquisitely described by a great poet of our time as

A silver shield with boss of gold
That spreads itself, some Faëry bold
In fight to cover—

and surmounted by a diadem, with the following couplet traced in golden characters beneath it:—

J'aurai toujours au cœur écrite
Sur toutes fleurs la Marguerite.

It was evident from the device that this posy was intended as an allusion to Marguerite of Navarre.

The Baron de Rosni (better known by his subsequent illustrious title of the Duc de Sully) appeared in the same martial apparelling in which he was first introduced. His long two-handed sword—a formidable weapon, described by a skilful professor of the art of defence, Giacomo di Grassi, as being "four handfuls in the handle, or more, having also the great cross"—was still girt to his side. The housings of his steed, a powerful roan, were crimson and black in colour; while plumes of the same mixed hues crested his morion, the visor of which was raised.

"Yon knight is of larger make than Alcandre, my liege," said Joyeuse; "it cannot be he."

"By Saint Andrew!" exclaimed Crichton, who had

witnessed the entrance of the two chieftains with rapturous enthusiasm, "the glowing trappings of yon preux chevalier remind me of the lay of the brave Louis de Beauveau (as charming troubadour as he was expert tilter), wherein he has depicted his own appearance at the jousts. Thus runs his ditty, if I remember rightly :—

LES PLUS ROUGES Y SONT PRIS.

I.

Slowly unto the listed field I rode,
Rouge was my charger's wide caparison ;
And the same hue that on his housing glowed,
Purpled my shield, my spear, my morion.

II.

Rouge was my couvrechief, that swept the sward,
Rouge the tall plume that nodded on my crest ;
And the rich scarf—my loyalty's reward—
Blushed, like a timorous virgin, on my breast.

III.

By broad ensanguined shield bore this device,
In golden letters writ, that all might see
How for bold deeds will lightest words suffice,
And thus it ran—"Les plus rouges y son pris."

"Have a care ! mon cher," said Joyeuse, smiling at his friend's ardour. "See you not against whose shield the lance of yon doughty knight is directed ?"

"Now, by Saint George !" replied Crichton, striking his spurs into his steed, and compelling him to execute a rapid succession of curvets, "I am right glad the appeal has been made to me."

"By the memory of my valiant uncle, François de Vivonne," exclaimed the Abbé de Brantôme, who, though not hitherto particularised, formed one of the group of courtiers in attendance upon the king, "you are the flower of knighthood, Chevalier Crichton, and

appear to revive in your own person one of those hardy champions of Francis the First, who, standing upon the very spot where we are now assembled, said, in admiration of their achievements—

Châteigneraye, Vieilleville, et Bourdillon,
Sont les trois hardis compagnons !”

“The saying would apply with equal force to the champions of our own time, dear abbé,” returned Crichton, smiling. “The courage of the three renowned warriors you have named survives in their successors ; the kingly courtesy of François is renewed in his grandson ; and our own monarch might, with as much truth as his ancestor, exclaim—

Joyeuse, Saint-Luc, et D’Epernon
Sont trois chevaliers braves et bons.”

The three nobles smilingly acknowledged the compliment ; nor did Henri appear less gratified than his favourites.

“What is all this ?” cried Chicot, who had now found his way to the side of his royal master ; “what miserable distich is that I hear ? Talk of ancestors and descendants—pouah—I, who am the descendant of the great Triboulet, who was fool to a greater fool, and upon whom my ancestor’s cap and bells as well as his office have fallen—I, Chicot, buffoon in ordinary to

Henri, par la grâce de sa Mère,
Inerte Roi de France, et de Pologne imaginaire,

swear and declare upon my bauble, that

Joyeuse, Saint-Luc, et D’Epernon
Sont fous au merveilleux Crichton !

And there’s a better rhyme, as well as sounder reason for you.”

Henri of Navarre, meanwhile, followed by his esquire,

having left the Baron de Rosni at the entrance of the tilt-yard, slowly traversed the arena, attracting universal attention, especially among the gentler sex, by his athletic and finely formed figure, by the singularity of his equipments, and more than all, by his vert-gallant and amorous demeanour, which even danger could not subdue, nor bars of iron entirely conceal. The carelessness with which he bestrode his mettlesome and curvetting charger; the continual movements of his helmet from side to side, as his ardent glances wandered over the crowd of beauties; the majestic ease of his carriage, and a thousand indescribable graces, none of which were lost upon the spectators, worked wonders in his favour. Something, indeed, there was in the gallant Bourbon's manly form that, under any disguise he might assume, never failed to awaken immediate interest in the female bosom. On the present occasion its effect was little less than magical; and as he paused for a moment beneath the grand gallery, a perfect sensation was excited among its fair and frolic occupants.

"Who is he?" ran from lip to lip.

"It is the Duc d'Anjou," said Madame de Nar-moutiers.

"It is Bussy d'Amboise," said Isabel de Montsoreau.

"It is the Duc de Guise," said la Maréchale de Retz.

"Mon Dieu! mesdames, yon knight's armour would encase all three," said Torigui, screaming with laughter.

"You ought to know your old lovers better."

"Unless, like the Demoiselle de Torigui, we should have had so many as to have forgotten all save the last," returned the maréchale maliciously.

"Merci, madame," rejoined the Florentine, "you are quite welcome to attack my memory, so long as you compliment my attractions."

"What if it be the gendarme of the Rue Pelican " sighed La Rebours.

"Your head has been running all the morning upon that soldier, demoiselle," remarked La Fosseuse pettishly. "You thought him like Henri of Navarre, and now you think everybody like him."

"Ah, if it should be the Bourbon, after all!" cried La Rebours, suddenly recovering her animation.

"Whoever he may be," replied Torigni, "he has decidedly the finest figure of any knight in the tilt-yard—the Chevalier Crichton not excepted."

"Name not the traitor in my hearing," observed Marguerite de Valois, whose attention this chance allusion to her lover's name had aroused.

"Our unknown cavalier appears in search of some dame from whom he may solicit a favour," said the Maréchale de Retz.

"And he is so like the Duc de Guise that you cannot possibly refuse him," rejoined Torigni.

"His glances are directed towards La Rebours," said La Fosseuse—"see, he moves."

"To me!" ejaculated La Rebours, crimsoning to the temples. "No," she added, with a look of disappointment, "it is to her majesty."

"And see you not the device on his shield?" remarked Torigni, "and the motto—

*J'aurai toujours au cœur écrite
Sur toutes fleurs la Marguerite?*

He is evidently an aspirant to the smiles of our gracious mistress. Your majesty," continued the artful Florentine, addressing the queen in a low tone, "now will have an opportunity of fully revenging yourself upon your inconstant lover."

"You forget whom you address, minion," replied Marguerite, vainly endeavouring to hide her emotion under the mask of impatience; "once more I forbid you to allude to him."

At this moment a page pressed forward, and, bend-

ing the knee before the Queen of Navarre, tendered the homage of the unknown knight.

"The companion-in-arms of the Baron de Rosni," he said, "who solicits some slight token from your majesty, that he may splinter a lance in your behalf with the Chevalier Crichton."

"With Crichton!" exclaimed Marguerite, rising.

"I was in the right, you see, madame," cried Torigni; but, perceiving the fearful change that had taken place in the countenance of the queen, she checked her vivacity. "After all, she will avenge herself upon her lover," thought the demoiselle; "that look reminds me of the night when Guillaume du Pratt, enticed by her caresses to the deed, for ever silenced the envenomed tongue of her enemy Du Guast."

"This knight is the companion of the Baron de Rosni, thou sayst?" demanded Marguerite, with an abstracted air.

"His brother-in-arms, madame," returned the youth.

"He shall receive a gage from our own hand," said the queen, after a brief pause.

"He will value it more highly," rejoined the youth. "Honoured by so fair a queen, his success in the career is certain."

"On my faith, beau sire, thou hast learnt thine office betimes," said Torigni, smiling.

"Let thy lord attend us within the chamber beneath this gallery," said Marguerite. "Demoiselles Torigni and La Rebours, you will accompany us." The page arose and departed.

"May I crave a word with your majesty?" said Esclairmonde, approaching the queen.

"Your pardon, demoiselle," replied Marguerite haughtily, "we would pass." And she quitted the gallery, followed by her attendants.

Having completed his survey of the fair occupants

of the balcony, and despatched the message we have just heard delivered, Henri of Navarre spurred his steed in the direction of the pavilion, before which, attached to a halberd struck deeply into the earth, was displayed Crichton's shield. Snatching a lance from his esquire, the monarch struck it against the targe with so much good will, that the halberd and its clanging burden were at once borne to the ground ; while, startled by the noise of falling arms, his charger began to rear and plunge violently.

"Harnibleau!" muttered Henri, sharply applying his armed heel to the flanks of the unruly animal, and by a powerful effort reducing him to subjection ; "this froward steed is evidently unused to the exercises of the tilt-yard. He starts at the clatter of steel as an unmanaged colt winceth at the lash of chambrière. He may know his paces ; but I doubt if I shall be able to bring him to the rest, after the career. My sage counsellor, Rosni, had, I suspect, his own motives, in persuading me to abandon my brave old Norman charger, whom the roar of a culverin or the clash of a thousand pikes would not affright, and whom I can restrain with a silken thread, for this high-spirited and fantastic barb, because, forsooth, he has finer limbs and a sleeker coat. The knave would gladly see me discomfited, that his own superior wisdom may, in future, be acknowledged. It shall go hard, however, if I do not, despite his ingenious stratagem, outwit him. At all events, I will not give him the satisfaction of perceiving the annoyance he has occasioned me. I have overcome greater obstacles than this rebellious animal presents—aye, and turned them to account, too. An enterprise without danger is of little worth. '*In via virtuti nulla est via,*' has ever been my device. And now for my lady's token ! Sa ha ! sirrah—take heed. You carry Cæsar and his fortunes."

Again applying the spur, and checking the impetuous

movements of his steed with an arm of iron, Henri, as deliberately as he came, returned to the grand gallery.

"Her majesty will bestow the token upon you with her own hand, monseigneur," said the page, advancing to meet him.

"*A la bonne heure !*" exclaimed the king. "This is exactly what I wished." And, dismounting, he flung the rein to his esquire, and entered the scaffold with a light and joyous footstep.

"This way, Sir Knight," said one of the huissiers stationed at the portal. "The Queen of Navarre will give you audience within this chamber."

A tapestried curtain, suspended before an open valve, was then drawn aside, and the king found himself in the presence of his consort.

Henri of Bourbon was not wont to have misgivings where a lady was concerned. But the situation in which he was placed with his queen was rather embarrassing. It was a relief to him, therefore, to find that she was not alone. Having no such apprehensions, and not being aware who it was that stood before her, Marguerite, immediately on the king's appearance, dismissed her attendants. La Rebours lingered for an instant behind her companion, and, as she passed the monarch, her embroidered handkerchief (it might have been by accident) fell to the ground. Henri stooped to raise it, and as he restored the perfumed mouchoir to its fair owner, his hand, divested of his gauntlet, contrived to encounter the taper fingers of the demoiselle. Assuredly it was not by accident that the pressure which he hazarded was so perceptibly returned.

"*Ventre-saint-gris !*" muttered the king, "this is the lovely dame whom I beheld in the Rue Pelican."

"I will stake my life that it is Henri of Navarre," thought La Rebours, glancing from beneath her downcast eyelids at the Bourbon's stately figure; "and if so," ran her meditations, as she quitted the room,

"there can be no danger in trusting him with his queen. I need apprehend no rivalry in that quarter. Connubial devotion is certainly not Henri's foible."

If the monarch felt disconcerted at the idea of a tête-à-tête with his spouse, his embarrassment was not diminished when he found that this little piece of gallantry had not escaped her notice. His fears, however, were needless. Marguerite entertained no jealousy of him; though it suited her purpose to affect some slight pique.

"The kerchief of my demoiselle would seem to have a higher value in your eyes, messire," she said, "than any gage I could bestow, were it even a tress of my own hair to bind upon your helm!"

"You are mistaken, madame," returned Henri, in a feigned voice, but in the impassioned tone which he had ever at command; "the simple pearl is lovely in mine eyes, but the 'pearl of pearls' is that which wins my homage. As Jean de la Taille, from whom I have borrowed the scroll upon my shield, sings—

Ce ne fut pas la paquerette
L'œillet, la rose, ni le lys;
Ce fut la belle Marguerite,
Qu'au cœur j'aurai toujours écrite.

Marguerite, your name is inscribed upon my heart as upon my buckler. Recall not your boon, I implore of you. Yield me that treasured gage, and you ensure me victory."

"If it will ensure you victory, it is yours," said Marguerite eagerly.

"What you refuse to love, you readily accord to hate, I perceive," returned Henri. "You have some quarrel to avenge upon the Chevalier Crichton."

"The deepest a woman has to avenge," replied Marguerite. "I will not disguise from you, messire, that I have to requite a lover's inconstancy."

"Soh," thought Henri, "I am destined to hear my own dishonour proclaimed by lips to which I cannot with propriety give the lie. I also have a quarrel to arrange with this Scottish knight," he added aloud, "and, by consequence, you could not have found a fitter champion to redress your wrongs. He has injured me as deeply as yourself."

"Impossible."

"Corbleu! madame," returned Henri, "most men would consider my injuries the heavier. But I will not contest the point. You are, undoubtedly, the best judge as to which of us is the greater sufferer."

"I see to what you allude, messire," said Marguerite. "I have to complain of the perfidy of a lover—you of the infidelity of a wife."

"Precisely so," replied Henri.

"Wash out the stain upon your name in the traitor's blood," exclaimed the queen. "As to your faithless dame, if the death of her paramour will not content your vengeance, I swear, if she belong to the court of France, or to that of my royal husband, Henri of Navarre, her crime shall not pass unpunished."

"The guilt of the adulteress shall not pass unpunished," rejoined Henri gravely. "But it is well for my faithless dame that my plan of retribution differs from that proposed by your majesty."

"You love her, then, despite her fault?" said Marguerite.

"No," replied Henri mournfully; "but I have loved her, and for that remembered tenderness I will spare her."

"Your dame is fortunate in the possession of a lord so patient," returned Marguerite scornfully.

"She is more fortunate than she deserves to be, I must own, madame," answered Henri.

"You may repent this weakness when it is too late," rejoined Marguerite. "I comprehend not how a wrong like this can be forgiven."

"Would not these words pass sentence upon yourself, madame, were they uttered in the presence of the king your husband?"

"Speak not of Henri," said the queen. "He hath long divorced himself from my love. If I have been faithless consort, he has been faithless lord. He cannot complain. I could have loved him—but—no matter! It is not of him I would speak, but of yourself."

"Two persons closely connected," thought the king.

"Hear me!" cried Marguerite, clasping Henri's fingers with a hand that burnt with fever; "your dame has wronged you—you love her not."

"I have already confessed as much, madame. Open not my bleeding wounds anew."

"I do so but to heal them. Now mark me. Let the result of this career be fatal to—to the Chevalier Crichton, and what I have of love is yours."

"*Ventre-saint-gris!*" mentally ejaculated Henri. "This is a novel reward for redressing my own injuries."

"How say you, messire?" demanded the queen impatiently.

"Can you doubt my answer? I accept your proposal. But what assurance have I of your sincerity?"

"My word—the word of an injured and vindictive woman—the word of a queen."

"When her injuries are redressed, the queen may forget what the woman has promised."

"The woman shall never forget that she is a queen; nor what is due to her as the sister and the spouse of kings," returned Marguerite haughtily. "When I laid my commands upon the Baron de Viteaux to slay the ribald Du Guast; when I made the same proposal to

him that I have made to you, he hesitated not.¹ But he had loved me long."

"I have loved you yet longer, Marguerite," rejoined Henri in a troubled tone, "and I will do your bidding. But do not liken me to the assassin Viteaux."

"I blame not your incredulity, messire," said the queen, resuming all her softness and blandishment of manner; "it could not be otherwise. That I should affect to love one whom I never before beheld—with whose features—with whose name I am alike unacquainted—were to belie myself—to deceive you. But there is something in the tone of your voice that inspires me with confidence. I have unhesitatingly trusted you with the hidden purposes of my soul. As loyal knight you will not betray them. Obey my behests, and I will fulfil my promise. You ask for some token of my truth. Here is one will remove all doubts," and as she spoke, she took from her neck a carcanet of pearls, the lustre of which was eclipsed by the dazzling fairness of her skin; "this ornament was the gift of Henri of Navarre."

"Diable!" ejaculated the king.

"It was given me on our espousals—it is yours."

"Could Henri of Navarre have anticipated you would part with it thus, his hand should have been hacked off at the wrist ere he had bestowed it."

¹ That these details are not exaggerated will be perceived by a glance at the subjoined account of the assassination of the *Sieur Du Guast*, taken from the *Journal de Henri Trois*. "*La reine Marguerite, piquée au vif, et animée encore par les plaintes de toutes celles que Du Guast avoit outragées, s'adressa à Guillaume Du Prat, Baron de Viteaux, alors caché à Paris, dans le Couvent des Augustins, pour un meurtre, qu'il avoit commis quelque temps auparavant en la personne d'Antoine d'Alégre; elle l'engagea par ses caresses à devenir son vengeur. Viteaux, pour faire son coup, choisit le premier de Novembre, vielle de la Fête des Morts, parce que le bruit de toutes les cloches de Paris qui se fait entendre alors étoit propre à cacher le bruit inséparable de l'exécution de son enterprise. Il se rend, avec quelques autres sur le soir, au logis de Du Guast, monte dans sa chambre, et le trouve au lit, où il le perce de plusieurs coups.*"

"How!"

"I crave your majesty's pardon. I have a strange habit of putting myself in the situation of other people, and for the moment fancied myself your credulous husband. Give me the chain."

"Remove your casque, then, and with my own hand I will attach the collar to it."

Henri appeared irresolute.

"Trifle not," said the queen, "but to the lists. And then death to the traitor, and confusion to your faithless dame."

"Be it so," replied the king, unhelming himself, and gazing sternly at his consort. "Take back your own words, Marguerite—confusion to my faithless dame."

"Henri!" ejaculated the queen, gazing at him as if she beheld a spectre. "Pity!—pity!"

"Be silent, madame," said the king; "this is my retribution."

Marguerite made an effort to control herself—but in vain. Her limbs failed her, and she sank senseless into the arms of La Rebours, who most opportunely flew to her assistance.

"Give me thy kerchief, ma mie," said Henri to the demoiselle; "it shall be my gage instead of this polluted carcanet. And now, thy hand—nay, thy lips, sweet one; we shall meet again anon."

"Success attend your majesty," said La Rebours, as the king departed. "Give me joy, Torigni," she added, when the latter appeared, "my fondest hopes are realised."

"In what way?" asked the Florentine.

"Hush! her majesty revives—the intelligence is not for her ears."

"Is he gone?" gasped Marguerite.

"He has returned to the lists, madame," replied La Rebours.

"And my gage?" asked the queen.

"Is there," answered the attendant, pointing maliciously to the neglected pearls.

"Assist me to that fauteuil, Torigni," said the queen, withdrawing herself from the support of La Rebours. "If Crichton prove victorious in this conflict, bid the demoiselle Esclairmonde attend me here."

VII

The Barb.

"——La seconde venue
Guerry encor, j'en ay bien souvenance,
L'autre rompit, et depuis contenance
N'ôt son destrier à la lice approchier,
Et car long temps ne se peuvent touchier."

—LOUIS DE BEAUEAU.

CRICHTON, meantime, in answer to the defiance of the King of Navarre, instantly proceeded to the entrance of the lists, executing, as he rode hither, so many graceful curvets and high passades (which latter, according to Pluvinel, constitute "*la vraye pierre de touche du bon chevalier, et du bon cheval*"), that the air resounded with the applauses of the spectators, and the tide of popular opinion, which a breath will ever turn, again ran high in his favour.

Stirred by their shouts, and still more elated by the prospect of an encounter with his kingly and chivalrous antagonist; perceiving, also, that the Bourbon had dismounted, and that the pales (again hastily stretched across the area under the direction of the Vicomte de Joyeuse and Montjoie) were not yet firmly fastened to their supporters, the Scot called to his esquire, and taking his spear, with the ostensible purpose of breathing his charger, performed a brilliant course alone.

Nothing could exceed the rapidity and dexterity with which this pass was made. The animal seemed to obey every impulse of his rider. Starting from his post with a snort of wild delight, he launched into the career as if he would bear down all opposition by his fury. Crichton threw the rein upon his shoulder, and flung his heavy lance into the air—caught it—again tossed it aloft—and repeated this extraordinary feat for a third time ere the haunches of his steed seemed to stiffen into marble on his arrival at the point of rest. Universal acclamations rewarded this triumphant exhibition of knightly skill.

But the admiration of the beholders amounted to the most rapturous enthusiasm as they witnessed what next ensued. The Scot shouted to the attendants, and, in obedience to his command, the ring employed in the tourney was instantly attached to an elevated post, forming part of the framework of the lists. Executing a demi-volte with curvets, he again started on his career; again thrice hurled his spear aloft; and, maintaining throughout this gallant action an unaltered carriage of body, moving only the right arm, as occasion demanded, finally carried off the prize upon his lance's point. This performance (prolonged in description) was the work only of a few seconds.

The dames waved their kerchiefs; the sergeants of the guard clashed their halberds; the mob flung their caps into the air, without being so successful in regaining them as the Scot had been in the recovery of his spear; the bosoms of the youthful nobles beat high with ardour and emulation; even the members of the royal group were loud in their applauses.

"Honneur aux fils des preux!" exclaimed Brantôme, with transport; "that course was bravely executed."

"A marvellous exploit, certes, my dear abbé," said Henri. "Your valiant uncle, the Sieur de la Châteigneraie, with all his address in horsemanship, and expert-

ness in the management of arms, could scarcely have achieved that amazing feat."

"It may not occur to your majesty's recollection, but precisely the same feat as that we have just witnessed, was performed by the *Sieur de la Châteigneraye*, in the presence of your royal father," returned Brantôme. "My brave uncle has been surpassed by no knight, living or dead, in vigour and address."

"Save by *Gui de Chabot, abbé*," cried the jester, with a scoffing grimace. "The coup de *Jarnac* has passed into a proverb. It will be fortunate for our dear *Henriot* if the coup de *Crichton* do not supersede it."

"A truce to this!" said the king; "thy jesting is ill-timed."

"Good counsel is generally so, *compère*," retorted *Chicot*. "If, however, after this specimen of *Crichton's* consummate skill, like you unknown knight, you are so madly adventurous as to tilt with him, I shall say of you, what one wiser than I am said of the king, your father—

Sire, vous n'êtes plus, vous n'êtes plus que cire!"

"You shall say what you please of us, *scéléret*," returned the good-humoured monarch, laughing; "if we do hazard the safety of our royal person, and endanger our hitherto untarnished reputation as a knight, by entering the lists with this invincible Scot, whom *Sathan* certainly abetteth. But see! his fool-hardy challenger again takes the field—ha! *Mort-Dieu!* what is this? Our *Béarnais* (if he must be so designated) tears the silken streamer from his spear, and casts it beneath his charger's hoofs."

"Observe also, my liege, that he replaces it with a kerchief," interposed Brantôme; "and note, moreover, that this kerchief has not the golden fringe which is worn by the *Queen of Navarre*. Her majesty, whose

colours he hath rashly assumed, has evidently refused him a favour—ha !—ha !”

“There is nothing extraordinary in that, Seigneur Abbé, seeing that the Admirable Crichton is in the case,” returned Chicot. “I warrant me, if thou hadst been his opponent, this cavalier’s suit would not have been fruitless. Let it suffice that he has a gage—no matter what—or whence obtained—

What a queen hath denied him,
A quean hath supplied him :
And the favour he beareth
No favourite shareth :
His choice is a right one
With kerchief a white one,
To tilt against Crichton.”

“By Phœbus ! gossip !” exclaimed the king, “thou rhymest like Frère Jean, en eramoisi. But hark ! the charge is sounded. Montjoie’s arrangements are completed. Allons ! messeigneurs. Hola ! Du Halde, my warder ! Hast thou contrived Ruggieri’s escape ?” he added, in a whisper.

“He is already without the Louvre, my liege,” returned the chief valet, in the same tone.

“The fair Esclairmonde is ours, then !” ejaculated Henri, with triumph.

And, followed by his favourites, he proceeded to the canopy and took his seat upon the throne.

By this time, the area of the tilt-yard was cleared of its numerous intruders. The marshals of the field hastened to their tribunal ; Montjoie hurried to the estrade reserved for himself and his attendants ; while each cavalier sought to secure for himself an advantageous position for the approaching spectacle. For the moment all was bustle and clamour. But, above the shouts of the various officers, stationed (it would seem in all ages), not so much to preserve order as to increase confusion, the trampling and neighing of

steeds, and the jingling of martial equipments, arose the loud fanfare of the trumpeter, making "young pulses dance" with its stirring notes.

As the blast died away, profound silence ensued. The two champions and their esquires alone occupied either extremity of the barriers. Each regarded his antagonist with curiosity. On the part of Crichton the feeling was one of enthusiastic delight; on that of Henri of Bourbon admiration was chilled by deep sense of wrong. Nevertheless, his frank and noble nature could not resist the Scot's high claims to consideration; and as he narrowly scrutinised his matchless symmetry of figure, and consummate grace of demeanour, he, who was no harsh judge of woman, felt half-disposed to overlook his consort's fault.

"*Ventre-saint-gris!*" he mentally ejaculated; "a likely galliard to please the fancy of a queen—and worth a thousand such *migniard* voluptuaries as the balladin *La Môle*, or that grand *dégouté* *Turenne*. I could forgive his attentions to *Marguerite*. But there is our fair cousin of *Condé*—I must punish his presumption in that quarter. *Sa ha!* the devil is in this steed."

Crichton now drew his visor over his glowing cheek, and repressing the tumultuous emotions of his heart, with a light and steady hand, placed his lance in its rest. The trumpet sounded for the second time; and Henry was about to follow the Scot's example, in expectation of the signal of assault, when, affrighted by the kerchief fluttering over his head, his fiery charger, disregarding all restraint, broke from his post, and dashed headlong into the area.

Expert in all martial exercises, the chivalrous Bourbon was one of the most perfect horsemen of his time, and his arm was endowed with no ordinary vigour; but neither skill nor strength availed him on the present emergency. Encumbered by his lance, which he

was unwilling to throw aside, he could only employ his left hand in coercion—while, deeply mortified and irritated at the occurrence, his efforts were in the first place directed rather to the punishment than the subjection of his unruly steed—and this made matters worse. Each application of the spur was followed by a fierce and violent plunge. The infuriated animal reared, jerked, winced, and resorted to every vicious practice and stratagem to dislodge his rider. In this he failed. But, in his turn, his rider failed in compelling him to approach the lists.

At this juncture, and just as the monarch, full of wrath against his counsellor Rosni, began to despair of accomplishing his point, assistance was afforded him from a quarter whence it could have been least anticipated. Perceiving the Bourbon's inability to govern his charger, Crichton rode towards him, and in a tone of the highest courtesy proffered to exchange steeds with him; expressing, at the same time, his perfect conviction that he could achieve the animal's subjection, and carry him safely through the course.

"By the soul of Bayard!" returned the Bourbon, with equal courtesy, "fame hath not belied you, Chevalier Crichton. Your proffer is worthy of a brighter age of chivalry, and should have been made to a worthier knight than myself. In acceding to your proposal I feel that I acknowledge my defeat. In any case you are victor in point of generosity. Nor will I by a refusal rob you of additional honour." So saying, he flung himself from his charger's back.

"It follows not, because I may be the more expert horseman, that I shall also prove the more expert tilter," returned Crichton, dismounting.

"If you overcome the impetuosity of this froward beast, you will accomplish a feat more difficult than that of Alexander of Macedon," rejoined the Bourbon. "But if you succeed in bringing him to the pales, look

well to yourself—I promise you the reception due to so valiant a champion—

*Les plus jolis n'ont pas à leur plaisance
Aucune fois l'honneur et le renom."*

"You will find me no fainéant," replied Crichton. "Nor do I think so lightly of your prowess as to neglect your caution."

At this moment the Baron de Rosni, attended by Montjoie and Joyeuse, rode up to them.

"Sire," said Rosni, in a whisper, "I pray you take my steed."

"Stand back, sir!" returned the Bourbon coldly.

"Chevalier Crichton," said Rosni, turning to the Scot, "mount not that ungovernable horse—my charger is at your service."

Crichton replied by vaulting into the saddle of the King of Navarre, and, giving the rein to the barb, he careered round the tilt-yard as if he was borne by one of the winged horses of the sun.

"Courage, mon Admirable," cried Joyeuse, looking after him with a smile.

Vain were the efforts of the nigh frantic steed to shake his firm-seated rider; he had to strive against one with whom contention was ineffectual. Crichton, for the moment, allowed him to expend his fire. He then struck spurs fiercely into his sides, and compelled him to execute upwards of twenty caprioles in a breath. His fury now visibly abated; and the Scot completed his mastery by another career, and a swift succession of curvets. The next moment the animal stood controlled and motionless at the entrance of the lists.

The loudest plaudits would have followed this achievement had not all clamour been interdicted during the actual progress of the jousts. As it was, an irrepressible murmur testified the wonderment and delight of the spectators.

The clarion now sounded for the third time, and the combatants started on their career. Both lances were splintered by the vehement shock of their encounter. But no injury was sustained on either side. A similar result followed the second atteinte.

"Give me that painted spear, it is of tougher wood," said Crichton to his esquire, while the trumpet was blown for the third assault. And couching his lance as he again sprang forward, he directed it, with unerring aim, against the crest of his antagonist's morion.

The result of the career was decisive. The shock was more violent than those of the preceding encounters. The lance of the Bourbon, whose mark had been the centre of the Scot's helm, again shivered to the handle; while the stroke of Crichton, into which he had thrown all his force, would unquestionably have unhorsed his adversary, had not the helmet of the monarch, which had never been firmly fastened since his interview with his queen, yielded to the blow, and rolled to the ground.

"Bon dieu?" exclaimed Henri Trois, rising, "it is the Béarnais—it is our brother of Navarre. We should recognise that Bourbon nose among a thousand. What ho!—our steed! our steed. Where is our mother?—where is her majesty, Catherine de Medicis? We would speak with her, ere we confront the hardy traitor. Surround us, messeigneurs, and let our body-guard be trebled. Some conspiracy may—nay, must be on foot. What think you of it, Villequier, and you, cousin of Nevers? See to the outlets of the tilt-yard. Suffer none to go forth, or to enter. By Saint Hubert! we have snared a tiger."

Crichton, meantime, had reined in his steed, and returned to the Bourbon. "Sire!" he said, speaking in a low, determined tone, "I have unwittingly betrayed you to your foes. But if you will confide in me, I pledge myself to accomplish your deliverance."

"My counsel to your majesty," interposed Rosni, "would be to hasten to the king your brother, and if possible obtain permission to depart with your escort ere he have time to confer with the queen-mother. It is your only hope."

Henri averted his head from his confidant. "Chevalier Crichton," he said, addressing the Scot, "I will trust you. There is my hand."

"If I take it not, sire," replied Crichton, "your majesty will understand my motive, when I say that the eyes of Catherine de Medicis are upon us."

"True," replied the Bourbon, "and those of our fair cousin of Condé also—hem ! chevalier."

VIII

The Englishman.

"Where'er I wander, boast of this I can,
Though banish'd, yet a true-born Englishman."
—SHAKSPERE: *Richard II.*

THE majestic and remarkable countenance of Henri of Navarre (a face once seen, not readily forgotten) had been instantly recognised by the majority of the assemblage ; and such of the crowd as were unacquainted with his features, speedily gathered his title from the general vociferations. Coupled with various and most discordant epithets, his name now resounded from every quarter. Some applauded his bravery and bonhomie ; some derided his imprudence and temerity ; others railed bitterly and loudly against his heresies and apostasy from the religion of Rome (whose tenets Henri, not over-scrupulous on matters of faith, embraced or renounced as circumstances required) ; others, on the contrary, silently and devoutly hailed him as

the champion of their creed. A few there were, who fancied they discovered in his sudden appearance in the midst of his foes, a signal for an insurrection and massacre, in retaliation for the sanguinary day of Saint Barthélemy, and held themselves in readiness to obey his mandates; while another, and more numerous faction, deeply interested in all events affecting their project, regarded the occurrence as singularly inauspicious. Catherine de Medicis, alone, viewed the discovery without surprise or dismay.

Popular by his affability, generosity, and manliness (qualities which afterwards won for him the affectionate appellation—yet hallowing his name in the breast of every true Frenchman—of “*Le Bon Roi*”), the Bourbon, even during the period of his detention within the Louvre, had attached no inconsiderable party to his cause; and amongst the youthful and light-hearted nobles then present, there were many whose zeal would have prompted them to declare themselves in his favour, had any attempt been made upon his life. The situation, therefore, of the intrepid monarch, who, attended by Crichton and Rosni, remained unmoved, with his hand upon the pommel of his sword, and a smile upon his lips, was not fraught with so much peril as at first sight would appear.

Joyeuse and D’Epernon, with several of the immediate and loyal adherents of Henri Trois, flew to each outlet of the tilt-yard, reinforced the guard, and issued the king’s commands to allow none to enter or to pass forth from the arena.

Before these orders could be obeyed, a man of robust appearance, and square, stout make, rushed upon the ancient, or standard-bearer of the guard, plucked from his side a long two-handed sword, leapt over the palisades of the lists, and followed by a huge dog, made the best of his way in the direction of Henri of Navarre.

The action was too suddenly and too swiftly executed to be prevented. But the flying figure of the man catching the eye of the Vicomte de Joyeuse, he struck his spurs into his charger, and dashed in pursuit with the intention of cutting him down. Nothing could have prevented the fugitive's destruction but the timely assistance afforded by his four-footed companion. Just as Joyeuse had overtaken him, and was about to discharge a blow, which must have proved fatal, the career of his steed was checked by the dog, whose fangs were suddenly fixed within the nostrils of the terrified animal. At the same moment the man turned and stood upon his defence.

With eyes starting from their sockets, veins distended, flanks quivering, head borne to the ground by the weight of the dog, and nostrils gushing with blood, the poor horse uttered a shrill neigh, sounding almost like a scream; but attempted neither to move, nor to free himself from his fierce assailant. Exasperated beyond endurance at the condition of his steed, Joyeuse directed his next assault against the hound.

"Hold!" exclaimed Blount. "Touch a hair of my dog's hide, and, by Saint Dunstan! I will no longer stay my hand."

Joyeuse replied by aiming a downward blow at the Englishman. Blount received the stroke upon the edge of his sword, and returned it with such good effect that the vicomte's rapier was beaten from his grasp and whirled to some distance.

"Call off thy dog, villain," shouted Joyeuse furiously, "or thou shalt repent it. Ha! Vive-dieu!" he added, as several of his attendants rode up, "seize him! If he resists, show him no quarter—yield, madman!"

"Never!" replied Blount stoutly, "were they ten times their number. I ask no quarter, and will yield to no man, or men. It shall not be said that an Englishman sued for mercy, while his hand could wield

a sword. Come on, then, my masters—one and all—and try the force of an English arm. Your sires have felt the weight of our blows at Créci and Poitiers—and their sons shall find that our bull-dog breed is not degenerated, or his country disgraced, in the person of Simon Blount.”

“Why do you hesitate?” thundered Joyeuse.

“Why do they hesitate?” echoed Blount, in a taunting tone, at the same time flourishing his tremendous blade with the greatest ease over his head. “Because I am an Englishman. They are six and I am one. They are mounted, I on foot. They have sword and partisan—I, sword only. They are Frenchmen—I am an Englishman. By my troth! we are fairly matched.”

“Silence him!” cried Joyeuse.

But this was no such easy matter. The inert but sturdy islander was now fairly roused from his habitual lethargy. His arm and tongue were alike in motion. He answered with a roar of defiance.

“Silence me, quotha. E’en let them, if they can! But they have good reasons for their forbearance. Their memories serve them too faithfully. They recollect the bygone times of the Regent Bedford—when a French noble was obliged to doff his cap to an English churl. Old Rabelais has told them of our thirst—and at whose cost we allayed it.”

“Cravens! will ye bear this?” cried Joyeuse. “He says truly—ye are six to one.”

“It was the same at Azincourt,” retorted Blount, “and ye know by whom that day was won.”

“That day was not won by big words, sirrah,” rejoined Joyeuse, amazed at the Englishman’s audacity.

“Right!” exclaimed Blount, waving his sword, as if selecting a mark. “I thank you for the hint. I have already talked too much.”

“Despatch this hound with your pike, Baptiste,” shouted Joyeuse, “and liberate my wounded charger.”

The man instantly obeyed, and thrust his partisan through the throat of Druid. Severely, but not mortally wounded, the courageous brute still maintained his grasp.

"Hew him in pieces!" vociferated Joyeuse. "It is the nature of the accursed animal to cling thus, while aught of life remains."

Another man-at-arms now took up the attack; and in his endeavour to cleave asunder the dog's skull, which he was only prevented from effecting by the resistance made by his thick hide, struck off his right ear and fore paw.

Blinded by his own blood, and frightfully mutilated, Druid kept his hold with unflinching tenacity.

"Saint George for England!" shouted Blount. And as he spoke, his sword whistled through the air, and the man-at-arms fell headless to the ground. "Here is a sweet morsel for thee, Druid," he added, with a savage laugh, at the same time spurning with his heel the gory head, which had dropped near him. "Come hither, sirrah, quick!"

Obedient to his master's call, the dog yielded that compliance which he had refused to commands enforced by sharpest blows, and at once set free the vicomte's charger. Uttering a piercing cry, the latter animal galloped, with uncontrollable speed, to the farther end of the lists; where, fortunately, his career was stopped by one of the heralds, and Joyeuse was enabled to dismount.

Blount's assailants were now reduced to five. But he was on all sides surrounded; and fresh foes were pouring against him from each quarter of the tilt-yard. Undismayed by numbers, and supported by his constitutional phlegm, he viewed his probable end with indifference, and resolved to meet it as became a brave man, and a denizen of that island nook which, in the words of the greatest of her sons, "breedeth very valiant children."

"Would I were with my back against the wall!" he thought; "I would take far greater odds, and give them ruder welcome than they bring. As it is, with this long poking-iron so luckily obtained, I will earbonado some of their doublets after a fashion in which they were never slashed before. Gules shall predominate over or and azure in their emblazoned coats."

And as these reflections ran through his mind, his sword again described a tremendous circle, in the course of which it encountered the various weapons of his antagonists, who were thrusting and striking at him from all points, and finally descending upon the shoulder of the halberdier by whom Druid had been first wounded, the man, cloven almost to the girdle, fell to the ground.

"Habet!" cried Blount, laughing, and again whirling round his ensanguined blade.

In the midst of this gladiatorial display, which was regarded by the beholders, even of the gentler sex, with the same fierce and thrilling interest that prevailed amongst the witnesses of the terrible entertainments held within a Roman circus, we shall take breath for an instant to describe more fully the weapon used by our English combatant. We have before adverted to the treatise of Giacomo di Grassi¹—

A man of great defence,
Expert in battles, and in deeds of armes—

and we shall now give the manner of wielding the two-edged sword, as delivered by the Italian professor. In the words of his quaint translator we are told that "one may with it (as a galleon among manie gallies) resist manie swords, or other weapons. And it is accustomed to be carried in the citie, as well by night as by day, when it so chaunceth that a few are constrayned to

¹ Giacomo di Grassi, his "True Arte of Defence." First written in Italian by the foresaid author, and Englished by I. G., Gentleman, 1594.

withstand a great manie. And because his weight and bigness require great strength, therefore those only are allotted to the handling thereof, which are mightie and bigge to behould, great and stronge in bodie, of stout and valiant courage. Who (forasmuch as they are to encounter manie, and to the end they may strike the more safelie, and amaze them with the furie of the sword) do altogether use to deliver great edge-blows, downright and reversed, fetching a full circle or compass therein, staying themselves sometimes upon one foot, sometimes on the other, utterlie neglecting to thrust, and persuading themselves that the thrust serveth to amaze one man onelie, but these edge-blows are of force to encounter manie. The which manner of skirmishing, besides that it is most gallant to behold, being accompanied with exceeding swiftness in deliverie (for otherwise it worketh no such effect) it is also most profitable, not properly of itselfe, but because men considering the furie of the sword, which greatly amaseth them, are not resolute to doe that, which otherwise they could not choose but doe."

All that Di Grassi has here so graphically depicted was performed by Blount—and more than this; for so great was his activity and dexterity—so nimble was he in the management and recovery of his weapon—so tremendous was its sweep, "being of the compass of ten arms or more," that in the space of a few moments he had disabled a third opponent, and beaten off the others.

"Hurrah!" he shouted, with lusty lungs, tossing, as he spoke, his bonnet into the air, "hurrah! for England, and God save Queen Bess."

At the same time, as if partaking of his master's triumph, Druid upturned his mangled visage, and uttered a loud and exulting howl.

"Poor fellow!" said Blount, his heart smiting him as he heard the sound. "Thou art sorely hurt; but

I have amply avenged thee," he added, looking grimly around; "we can at least die together—thou wouldst never survive thy master."

The faithful dog understood this appeal. His fierce howl changed to a piteous moan.

"Peace, sirrah!" cried Blount angrily, "no whimpering. Thou art wounded, or I would bestow a buffet on thee for thy cowardice. An English bull-dog—and whine?"

The red flame in the dog's eyes at this reproof blazed yet more fiercely, and his fangs were instantly displayed.

"Why, that is right," cried Blount, in a tone of approval.

Whereupon, shouldering his gigantic blade, and keeping his eye steadily fixed upon the movements of his foes, though menaced with immediate, and it would seem, inevitable destruction, in order to show his utter disregard of the peril in which he stood, he began to carol in a rough, but not inharmonious voice, the following homely stave:—

DRUID.

I.

Through the world have I wandered wide,
With never a wife, or a friend by my side,
Save Druid—a comrade staunch and tried—

Troll on away!

Druid, my dog, is a friend in need,
Druid, my dog, is a friend indeed,
Druid, my dog, is of English breed!

More need I say?
Troll on away?

II.

Druid would perish my life to save,
For faithful Druid like fate I'd brave,
The dog and his master shall find one grave,
Troll on away!

Life ! I heed not its loss a feather !
And when black Atropos snaps my tether,
She must cut twice—we'll die together !
No more I'll say,
Troll on away !

In enumerating the good and evil qualities of Henri Trois, we have before mentioned his singular predilection for the canine species. His attachment to dogs was as strong as his aversion to cats. Upon the commencement of the skirmish just described, the royal train, by their sovereign's command, had halted, and Henri's attention throughout had been attracted towards Druid, whose courage and fidelity he could not sufficiently admire and applaud. It was owing to this circumstance that Blount remained so long unmolested.

"What would I give for a follower so faithful !" said the king. "Such a hound were worth a whole pack of barbets and spaniels, with my two favourites, Citron and Chatelard, at their head. I must possess him. Miron will speedily heal his wounds. But how shall we get rid of his master, without doing the dog further mischief ?"

"Let your arquebussiers fire upon the knave, my liege," said the Duc de Nevers, in a low tone ; "and, if a stray ball should reach the Béarnais, your majesty will have an enemy the less. Maurevert is behind us, armed with the same caliver with which Coligni was wounded. A look will suffice for him."

"Thanks, fair cousin," returned Henri, "but we are in no such hurry. We see no reason to suspect treachery on the part of our brother of Navarre. He appears as much diverted as ourself with this fray. Besides," he added, smiling, "we have not yet consulted our mother upon the expediency of a step so important in its consequences."

"I will answer for her majesty's approval," returned the duke hastily.

"You!" exclaimed the king, with a look of surprise. "Are you our mother's confidant, Monsieur le Due? What reason have you to suppose she would desire the death of the Béarnais?"

"Because," replied Chicot boldly, "he is like the wrong king unexpectedly turned up at Primero; he spoils the order of the cards, and ruins the game."

"Parbleu! what game, compère?" demanded the monarch.

"Your majesty forgets the dog you are anxious to save," interrupted the duke, darting an angry glance at the jester; "another moment and it will be too late."

"Right!" cried Henri, "command yon men-at-arms to stay their swords, and let a company of arquebussiers advance."

The king's orders were instantly obeyed. The soldiers, who had rushed to the assistance of their comrades, reluctantly withdrew. A dozen arquebussiers, attired in richly emblazoned doublets of crimson frieze, girded in at the waist by broad leathern belts, from which depended matches of lighted tow; with great ruffs round their throats, pale green hose upon their lower limbs, and roses of ribbons, almost as large as the shoes they covered, upon their feet; each carrying on his right arm a huge bell-mouthed musket, and on his left a forked staff intended to support it—this troop, headed by Maurevert, the hired assassin of Charles the Ninth (and surnamed *Le Tueur du Roi*), swiftly advanced, ranged themselves in two lines by the side of the king, planted their forks in the ground, pointed their artillery against the Englishman's breast, and awaited only the royal mandate to fire.

Blount witnessed these proceedings without dismay. When he saw the death-dealing tubes levelled against

him, he stooped to the ground, and catching Druid in his arms, breathed the words of his song—

The dog and his master shall find one grave !—

fully prepared to meet his fate.

“Hold !” exclaimed Henri, “some fiend hath put it into the knave’s head to defeat our object. Bid him surrender at discretion, Maurevert. Once get possession of his dog, and deal with him as you list. But I charge you, on your life, do the animal no further injury.”

Maurevert stepped forwards. Blount, however, sturdily refused to yield up his sword.

At this moment, and while Henri, ever irresolute when resolution was required, hesitated to give the signal to the arquebussiers, Crichton rode up. “I will disarm him, sire,” he said, “if I have your majesty’s permission to do so.”

“Gramercy ! mon cher, you have our permission at once, and to slay him, too, if it please you, provided you harm not the dog.”

“One will scarcely succumb without the other, I suspect, my liege,” replied the Scot. “We shall see.”

Saying which, he dismounted, and giving his steed to the charge of an attendant, advanced towards Blount.

“Are you mad ?” he said sternly, as he arrived within a few paces of the Englishman, “that you adopt this braggart posture ? Yield ! and I may yet preserve your life.”

“I should hold it foul scorn were such words to pass my lips, even at your bidding, Chevalier Crichton,” replied Blount doggedly.

“Fool !” said the Scot, in a low and significant tone, “this is but a feint. Throw down your sword. I will be your safeguard.”

"Were I to do so it would seem as if I yielded," rejoined Blount; "and I would rather die a thousand deaths than these accursed Frenchmen should be able to crow over me."

"Defend yourself, then," exclaimed Crichton, plucking his rapier from the scabbard.

"If I fall by your hands I shall die the death I would have chosen," replied Blount. "Yet think not I will perish tamely. I hold it too good luck to cross swords with you, not to approve myself worthy of the honour. But our blades are ill-matched. I cannot fight without equal arms."

"I have helm and corslet," answered Crichton; "you have neither buff jerkin, nor steel cap. The advantage is on my side."

"Down, Druid," said Blount, quitting his hold of the dog; "stir not—use neither tooth nor claw. Chevalier Crichton," he added, in a tone of some emotion, "if I fall—this hound——"

"I understand," replied Crichton. "I will be master."

"No!" said Blount, "I meant not that—despatch him."

"Waste no more words in this idle parley," returned Crichton fiercely. "My blows are for men, not dogs. Again, I say, defend yourself."

"Saint George for England!" shouted Blount, fetching a compass with his sword that dazzled the eyes of the beholders like a flash of lightning. But rapid as was this circle—not so swift was it as the corresponding movement of the Scot. Instead of endeavouring to avoid the blow, or to encounter its force, where it was most dangerous, at a distance, he at once rushed in upon the Englishman, met the edge of his weapon in mid sweep with a stoccado, and nothing daunted that his own rapier was hurled from his grasp, clutched with his left hand the wrist of his

adversary, and with his right fearlessly catching hold of his enormous blade, by a violent downward jerk wrested it from his gripe.

Thus far Druid had obeyed his master's orders, and crouched inoffensively at his feet ; but now instinctively comprehending his danger, he flew with such violence against Crichton's legs that, had they not been plated in steel, he must have withdrawn his attack from Blount to defend himself from his follower. "Lie still, sir," cried the Englishman furiously ; and setting his foot upon the dog's back, he pressed him, notwithstanding his desperate struggles, forcibly to the ground. "You are the victor," he continued, addressing Crichton ; "strike !"

"I have accomplished all I desired," replied the Scot, "in disarming you."

"I will not yield," said Blount sullenly. "You had better finish me."

The words were scarcely uttered, when his arms were suddenly seized from behind by a couple of halberdiers, who had stolen upon him unawares ; and a stout sword-belt, slipped over his wrists and drawn tightly together, prevented any further resistance on his part. At the same moment a sash, tied in a noose and flung over the head of Druid by a third man-at-arms, made the brave animal likewise a prisoner.

"Harm neither," said Crichton, addressing the guards ; "but await his majesty's pleasure—and see ! he approaches."

"Draw near to me, I pray you, Chevalier Crichton," said Blount, gazing earnestly at the Scot ; "I have something to communicate which, in my confusion, I had forgotten."

"I know what you would say," returned Crichton, making a gesture of silence ; "all is lost !"

"The devil !" exclaimed Blount, with a look of disappointment ; "my labour then has been in vain. It

was merely to bring you these tidings that I adventured within the lists."

"Heed not that, good Blount, but pacify your dog," said Crichton, noticing, with uneasiness, the violent efforts of the animal to free himself, by which he was well-nigh strangled; "on his life hangs your own."

"True," replied Blount, taking the words literally, "it does so." And he addressed an angry declamation to Druid, who instantly became passive in the hands of his captor.

IX

The Two Henris.

Premier Soldat. Le Béarnais a peut-être promis de retourner à confesse. Ça serait heureux, tout de même—il me fait l'effet d'un bon compère de roi !

Deuxieme Soldat. Le nôtre n'a pas mauvais air non plus sur sa grande jument—mais il sent trop le jasmin.—*La Mort de Henri Trois.*

UNWILLING to hold any private conference with the King of Navarre until he should receive some information of Catherine's disposition towards him, and "perplexed in the extreme" that no message had as yet arrived from her majesty, Henri Trois, uncertain what line of policy he ought to pursue, and glad of any pretext to gain further time, instead of advancing to question the Bourbon, as he had originally intended, bent his course towards the captive Englishman. This plan, however, was defeated. Henri of Navarre, yielding tardy compliance with the earnest solicitations of Rosni, who represented, in the most moving terms, the perils and calamities in which his present fatal obstinacy must necessarily involve himself, his people, and his religion, came suddenly to the resolution of

throwing himself upon the generosity of his royal brother. Accordingly, when Henri Trois turned aside to confer with Blount, he struck spurs into his charger, and rode towards him.

A greeting of apparently fraternal warmth passed between the two monarchs. Though each, in secret, distrusted the other, both deemed it prudent to assume an air of unbounded confidence and goodwill. Disimulation formed no part of the Bourbon's frank and loyal character. But his long experience of the perfidy and insincerity of the race of Valois, while it prevented him from being Henri's dupe, satisfied him that any advantage which might accrue to him from the interview, could only be attained by the employment of similar artifice. Throwing himself, therefore, instantly from his steed, he attempted, with the greatest cordiality, to take the hand of the king, with the intention of proffering the customary salutation.

Henri Trois, however, drew back his steed as he approached. "Your pardon, my brother," he said, with a gracious smile, "we would cut off our right hand could we suspect it of heresy; nor can we consent to take yours, tainted as it is with that contagious leprosy, unless we first receive assurance from your lips that you are come hither, like the prodigal son, to confess your indiscretions, to implore our forgiveness, and to solicit to be received once more into the indulgent bosom of our holy Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church."

"Sire," replied the Bourbon, "I own that I am in much the same predicament as the unfortunate wight to whom you have likened me. I have, at this moment, more nose than kingdom—more care than coin—more hope than faith—more regard for your majesty than the religion you propose——"

"And more regard for your body than your soul, I fear, my brother," interrupted Henri Trois, gravely

shaking his head, and telling a bead or two upon his rosary.

"That is to say, he has more regard for his mistresses than his queen," said Chicot. "You are right, compère. Our Béarnais will never be saved unless the good old faith of the Gentiles comes round again, and new altars are raised at Cyndos and Paphos to the goddess he worships."

"Certes, thou malapert knave, I am a heretic in no creed in which beauty is concerned," replied the Bourbon, laughing; "and amid yon gallery of fair saints, there is not one to whom I would refuse adoration."

"I could point out one," cried the jester.

"I defy thee," said the Bourbon.

"Your queen!" returned Chicot.

Even Henri Trois could not help joining in the mirth occasioned by this sally of the jester.

"Ribald!" exclaimed the Bourbon, laughing louder than the rest; "thy fool's cap alone protects thee from my resentment."

"My fool's calotte is a better defence than many a knight's casque," answered Chicot. "For the love I bear her majesty of Navarre, I will exchange it for thine, and throw my marotte into the bargain. Thou wilt need both on thy next encounter with the Admirable Crichton."

"Wilt thou throw thyself into the bargain, knave," asked the Bourbon, "and follow my fortunes?"

"Of a surety, no!" replied the jester. "That were to quit the master for the valet; the provost for the prisoner; the falconer for the quarry."

"Pardieu! compère," said Henri Trois, in a tone of raillery, "art thou so blind to thy own interest as to tarry in our service, when an offer so brilliant is made thee by our brother of Navarre? Bethink thee of the eminence to which thy wisdom and decorum

must, necessarily, promote thee, amongst the synods of the Huguenots, and the sage councils of the court of Pau!"

"I never leap in the dark, gossip," replied Chicot. "It were the province of a wise man to go in quest of danger. I am a fool, and prefer safe quarters at home."

"Wholesome advice may be gathered even from the mouth of fools, you perceive, brother," said Henri Trois. "May I now inquire to what fortunate circumstance I owe the unexpected happiness of this visit? I have been singularly misinformed about you and your proceedings. I am told you are an enemy—I find you our best of friends. I learn that you are at the head of a hostile army, putting my towns and subjects to fire and sword—I find you as blithe companion as ever, and almost unattended. My last accounts are, that you are barricaded within the walls of Pau or Nérac; my next are gathered from your own lips within the walls of the Louvre. See how one may be deceived."

"Your majesty is not deceived in my expressions of friendship," replied the Bourbon cordially. "Will it please you to command your gentlemen to stand farther off?"

"Excuse me, my brother, if I venture to retain my attendants," replied Henri Trois. "I am curious to question this bold knave," he added, glancing at Blount. "You may reserve your tale if you please for the ear of our confessor, whom you will permit me to recommend in the hope of accomplishing your conversion."

"Your confessor, sire!" ejaculated the Bourbon, knitting his brow.

"And at the tail of the priest the headsman," added Chicot. "You will not then fail to profit by his instruction, and for the third time get rid of any scruples

of conscience. The laconic message of his late majesty, Charles the Ninth, to your cousin, Henri of Condé, had other merits besides its conciseness."

"What message was that, gossip?" asked Henri Trois, affecting ignorance.

"Messe, mort ou Bastille!" replied the jester. "Our Béarnais will remember it by the token, that about the same time he abjured his own Calvinistic heresies."

"Ventre-saint-gris! thou scurrilous varlet," cried the Bourbon fiercely; "if thou darest to push thy mischievous pleasantry further, not even thy own insignificance, or thy royal master's presence, shall prevent my inflicting due chastisement upon thee."

Alarmed by the menacing aspect of the King of Navarre, with a grimace of mixed terror and defiance, Chicot, like a snarling cur, apprehensive of the heels of a noble steed he has annoyed beyond endurance, now turned tail, and retreated to the protection of his master, who was secretly delighted with this specimen of his skill in the "art of ingeniously tormenting."

"Since you decline answering my inquiries respecting the motive of your visit, brother," said Henri Trois, in his blandest accents, "I will not press the point. But I trust you will not object to remaining near my person till I return to the banquet?"

"Your majesty has only to command me."

"And as you have no attendants excepting the Baron de Rosni, I give you your choice of six of my own gentlemen, who will continue constantly by your side."

"I understand your majesty. I am a prisoner."

"I did not say so, brother. Choose your attendants."

"My choice is readily made, sire. I shall name but one—the Chevalier Crichton. I leave the nomination of the others to him."

"Fænum habet in cornu," muttered Chicot, "a wittol's choice."

"You could not have made a better election," observed Henri Trois, with a smile.

"I think not," said the Bourbon.

"I am sure not," added Chicot. "Forgiveness becomes a Christian prince. Madame Marguerite will highly applaud your generosity and placability."

"Peace, droll!" said Henri Trois. "And now, brother," he continued, in the same honeyed tone he had previously adopted, and which by those who knew him was more dreaded than the most violent bursts of indignation; "as the jousts are at an end, and you will have no further occasion for it, I entreat you to resign your sword to the custody of him whom you have appointed your principal attendant."

"My sword, sire?" exclaimed the Bourbon, recoiling.

"Your sword, brother," repeated Henri Trois blandly.

The King of Navarre looked around. On all sides he was invested by danger. The whole circle of the area in which he stood bristled with pikes and spears. Above the halberds of the Switzers rose the javelins of the Scottish guards; and above the javelins of the Scots gleamed the long lances of D'Epernon's gallant Gascon troop. Here was stationed a company of archers—there a band of arquebussiers. On the right were arrayed the youthful nobles, under the command of the Vicomte de Joyeuse, readily to be distinguished by their gorgeous apparel and fluttering pennons; on the left was drawn out the sumptuous retinue of the Duc de Nevers. Nor was this all. A nearer circle of the king's bodyguard encompassed him. Every hand was upon a sword-hilt—every glance fixed upon him. As he carelessly noted all this hostile preparation, the Bourbon turned towards his counsellor Rosni, who stood leaning upon the handle of his sword immediately behind him. Not a word—not a sign were exchanged between them. But the monarch understood the meaning of the cold, stern look of his counsellor. At this moment, the rolling of drums,

mingled with the sound of other martial instruments, was heard from the outer courts of the palace.

"Hark! the tambour!" exclaimed Henri Trois. "Fresh troops have entered the Louvre."

"By your command, sire?" asked the Bourbon, in a tone of displeasure.

"Our subjects are careful of our safety," answered Henri Trois evasively.

"They ought to be so, sire," replied the Bourbon; "your majesty has well earned their love—and when were the people of France ungrateful? But against whom are all these precautions taken? Is the Louvre in a state of siege, or have the burgesses of your good city of Paris broken into revolt?"

"No, brother, our good city is at present free from faction or tumult; and it is our intention (with the aid of Heaven) to maintain its tranquillity undisturbed."

"You cannot suppose I would be the instigator of disorder, sire," said the Bourbon. "I have drawn the sword to protect the rights of my people, and to uphold their persecuted creed, not to wage war upon your majesty. On any terms which shall secure to my subjects the immunities and religious toleration they seek, I will, at once, enter into a compact of truce with your majesty, and place myself in your hands as a hostage for the due observance of its conditions."

"Sire!" exclaimed Rosni, grasping his sovereign's arm; "each word you utter is a battle lost."

"Your³ majesty will not now suspect me of disloyalty," continued the Bourbon, disregarding the interruption.

"I suspect nothing, brother—nothing whatever," said Henri Trois hastily; "but I will sign no truce—enter into no compact, which shall favour, or appear to favour, the dissemination of heresy and sedition. To tolerate such a faith were to approve it. And I would

rather command a second Saint Barthélemy ; rather imitate the example of my brother, Philip the Second of Spain ; or pursue the course pointed out to me by my cousin of Guise and the gentlemen of the League, than in any way countenance a religion so hateful. I am too good a Catholic for that, brother. My reign has been (for my sins) disturbed by three great troubles. My brother of Anjou and his faction ; the Balafré and his leaguers ; you and your friends of the reform."

"Sire !"

"I know not which of the three has been the most vexatious. Anjou with his claims ; Guise with his pretensions ; or you with your exactions. I shall be glad to put an end to one of these annoyances."

"I have exacted nothing but what was my due, sire," replied the Bourbon bluntly.

"So saith Anjou ; so saith the Guise ; so say all rebels."

"Rebels, sire !"

"Fret not yourself about a word, brother. Your own conduct will best prevent the application of the term, if you deem it injurious."

"Sire," replied the Bourbon, drawing himself up to his full height, and regarding his royal brother with a glance of undisguised scorn and defiance, "you have done me deep wrong in stigmatising me as a rebel. It is false. I am none. Rashness, insane rashness, if you please, is all that can be laid to my charge. I came hither attended only by the Baron de Rosni, whose person, as my ambassador, guarded by your passport, is sacred ; and as I came I should have departed, had not an accident occasioned my discovery. No thought of treason was in my breast. Nor had I other motive save a desire to splinter a lance with one whose prowess I doubted, with as much justice, it appears, as your majesty now exhibits in questioning my sincerity."

"You mistake me, brother. Heaven forbid I should question your fealty."

"Your actions contradict your words, sire," returned the Bourbon. "It is evident from the threatening demeanour of your attendants, from the hostile disposition of your troops, as well as from the orders you have issued, that you do distrust me; and that you have more reason to apprehend my influence with the populace, in the event of an insurrection, than you care to admit. Your alarm is groundless. Had I come as an enemy, I should not have come alone. I am the contriver of no plot, the leader of no faction; nor, amid yon vast assemblage, could I point out the features of a single adherent, though I nothing fear, if my war-cry were once raised, I should find friends enow to rally round my standard. Yesternorn, with but a dozen followers, I entered the gates of Paris; to-day, with but one, those of the Louvre. And to-morrow's dawn shall find me and my scanty train far on our way to my territories, if I have your majesty's permission to depart peaceably."

"In the meantime, brother," said Henri Trois, "I would gladly learn what induced you to quit those territories to which you are now apparently so anxious to return? I can scarcely flatter myself that a desire to hold this interview with me was your sole motive."

"So far from it, sire, that I repeat it was my intention to have remained strictly incognito, had not my own heedlessness betrayed me. The object of my hare-brained journey I will no longer disguise. When I deserted the Louvre," he added, his brow relaxing to a slight smile, "there were two things which in my haste I left behind me."

"Ah! what were they, brother?"

"The mass and my wife, sire. For the loss of the former I felt little concern. The want of the latter was a more serious grievance. And having failed in my

previous remonstrance, made through the *Sieur Duras*, I thought the fault might rest with my envoy. Accordingly, I resolved——”

“To come yourself,” interrupted *Henri Trois*, laughing heartily. “A wise determination, certes. Still, I fear your suit has proved as unsuccessful as ever, though backed by your own solicitations.”

“His majesty is certain of gaining his cause now that he has employed the *Chevalier Crichton* as an advocate,” cried *Chicot*. “It is exactly three years since the *Sieur Duras* came to Paris on this fool’s errand, and then *Bussy d’Amboise* sent him back again, like *Panurge*, ‘avec une puce à l’oreille.’ The same result would have followed his own application had it not been for this master-stroke. Of all men *Henri of Navarre* ought to be the last to forget the maxim, that—

A husband out of season
Is a husband without reason !”

“Let not these taunts annoy you, brother,” said *Henri Trois*. “You shall have both your lost matters. But I cannot restore the one without the other.”

“I will have neither, sire.”

“You are changeable, brother.”

“It may be so, sire,” replied the *Bourbon* coldly ; “but I have the same aversion to a faithless woman that I have to a consecrated wafer.”

“I have at all events made you the offer,” said *Henri Trois* angrily. “And now, *Chevalier Crichton*,” he continued, addressing the Scot, who had remained near him, a silent, but deeply interested observer of the scene——“advance !—arrest him !”

These words, uttered in a sharp, abrupt tone, produced a startling effect upon the group. *Saint-Luc* and *D’Epernon* drew their swords, closing in on either side of their sovereign. The *Bourbon* uttered a single exclamation, and placed his hand upon the hilt of his

own weapon. His arm, however, was again forcibly withheld by Rosni.

"Remember, sire," said the baron, in a deep whisper, "your sacred pledge to your people, and to your God. One false step, and your subjects are without a ruler—your Church without a defender. Be warned!"

"*Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat*," said Chicot.

Crichton meanwhile stirred not, but watched steadily the movements of the King of Navarre. "Must I repeat my orders, messire?" asked Henri Trois.

"No, sire," replied the Bourbon. "I will relieve the Chevalier Crichton from his embarrassment. Here is my sword."

The Scot received it with a profound salutation.

"Keep it," continued the Bourbon; "you need not blush to bear it."

"I blush to receive it, sire," returned Crichton, scarcely able to repress the emotions swelling within his bosom.

"And now for the other captive and his dog," said Henri Trois.

"Hold, sire," exclaimed the Bourbon; "ere this conference is broken up, I have a secret of importance to disclose to you. I would willingly have imparted it to your ears alone. But, since you refuse me a private audience, I am compelled to proclaim it openly."

At this moment the shifting glances of Henri Trois fell upon the Duc de Nevers. The latter was evidently ill at ease, and, approaching his sovereign, said in a low and emphatic tone—

"This interview were better concluded, sire."

"I think otherwise, fair cousin," returned the king, whose curiosity was awakened. "May I venture to trust myself alone with him for a few moments?" he whispered. "He is unarmed."

"By no means, sire," returned the duke ; "he has a poignard."

"True," returned Henri Trois ; "and he is not unskilful in its use, as I have seen. His strength, too, greatly exceeds my own, and, though his bearing is frank and loyal, it were most imprudent implicitly to confide in him. Speak, brother," he continued, aloud. "I am impatient to hear your disclosure."

"Your majesty drives me to the course I now adopt," returned the Bourbon haughtily ; "the shame I would willingly spare the queen your mother I will no longer spare her."

"Will you endure this insolence, sire?" said the Duc de Nevers, alarmed at the King of Navarre's commencement.

"Heed him not," returned Henri Trois ; "her majesty will give herself little concern about his reproaches."

"What I would have requested," continued the Bourbon, who had paused for a moment, "I now demand, in the name of my cousin, Henri the First of Bourbon, Prince of Condé, whose person I here represent ; I require from your majesty the liberation of his sister, unjustly detained a captive within the Louvre by the queen-mother, Catherine de Medicis."

"Mort-Dieu ! brother," exclaimed Henri Trois, "you are strangely deceived in this matter. Our mother has no such captive."

"Contest not the point, sire," whispered the Duc de Nevers, who was now relieved from his own apprehension. "Promise her liberation."

"Your majesty has been, designedly, kept in ignorance of the circumstance," said the Bourbon.

"Well, brother," returned Henri Trois, with affected bonhomie, "if your representation be correct, we pass our word for the freedom of the princess."

As this speech was uttered, a slight exclamation of joy escaped Crichton. But when the king glanced

towards him, his eyes were riveted upon the Bourbon's sword.

"Add to your boon, sire," said the King of Navarre, "for which I thank you as heartily as if my own liberty had been included in it, and suffer the princess to set forth at once, from the Louvre, under your safe-conduct. My own escort shall, with your majesty's permission, act as her convoy to Henri of Condé."

"Why this extreme urgency, brother?" asked Henri Trois doubtfully.

"Because," replied the Bourbon, "while she remains in the power of Catherine de Medicis, her life, her honour, are in danger."

"Beware how you scandalise our mother," returned Henri Trois, with warmth. "These are dark accusations."

"They are made in broad daylight before your assembled nobles, sire, and will not be unremembered."

"Nor unrequited," answered Henri Trois, frowning. "Proceed, brother."

"I am a soldier, not a courtier, sire," continued the Bourbon. "My steel corslet is seldom exchanged for a silken pourpoint—my rude speech as seldom takes the garb of flattery. Your majesty will bear in mind that you have forced me to make this charge in public. I am prepared to answer to the queen your mother for my accusation, and to approve it. Your royal word is passed for the liberation of the princess. That is enough for me."

"What are we to think of this mystery?" demanded Henri Trois of the Duc de Nevers.

"That his majesty of Navarre's wits, as well as his discretion, have deserted him, my liege," returned the duke. "I am sufficiently in the confidence of her majesty, the queen-mother, to assert unhesitatingly that there is no such princess."

"You are sure of it, fair cousin?"

"As of your majesty's existence—as of the presence of yon Bernese bear."

"You have greatly relieved me. I began to fear that I had, in some way or other, committed myself."

The Bourbon, meanwhile, conferred an instant apart with his counsellor. "Thou wilt command this escort, Rosni," whispered he, "and say to the Prince of Condé that——"

"I quit not your majesty's side for any prince or princess," interrupted Rosni.

"How, sir?"

"Spare your frowns, sire. I can be as obstinate, on occasion, as your majesty."

"Stay with me, then, my faithful friend," replied the Bourbon, pressing the hand of his counsellor, "and let our recent difference be forgotten. Thou hast my full pardon."

"When your majesty has obtained your own forgiveness, it will be time enough to extend the same grace to me," rejoined Rosni bluntly.

"Chevalier Crichton," said the Bourbon turning in displeasure from his confidant, "will you escort the Princess of Condé to her brother?"

The Scot's colour mounted to his temples at the proposal. "Your majesty has already appointed me to the post of your chief attendant," he returned, in a voice of constrained calmness; "I cannot accept both offices."

"Nor can I consent to part with you, mon cher," said Henri Trois approvingly. "To put an end to this discussion, brother," he continued, addressing the Bourbon, "if you will find the princess, I will undertake to find the convoy."

"A la bonne heure," cried the King of Navarre. "My task will be readily performed. Behold her!" he added, pointing to the royal gallery.

"Behold whom?—you cannot mean——"

"In the queen of the lists—in the fair Esclairmonde—your majesty beholds the sister of Henri of Condé—my cousin—your cousin, sire."

"Mort et damnation! Esclairmonde my cousin! Esclairmonde a Princess of Condé! Were it so—but you do not, cannot expect us to credit your assertion, unsupported by proof, upon a point like this?"

"I have proofs, sire—proofs of her illustrious birth—of her capture as an infant by Tavannes—of her detention within the Louvre by Catherine—proofs which will carry conviction even to the mind of your majesty."

"Produce them, brother, produce them!" cried Henri Trois, trembling with agitation.

"Let your guard, by sound of trump, summon before your presence Messire Florent Chrétien, a preacher of the Reformed Faith, and the spiritual adviser of the princess; he is within the Louvre—he is in possession of these proofs."

"Ha! think you to delude us by the devices of the Evil One—of his minister?" vociferated Henri Trois. "Think you we would place the fabrications of this miserable hypocrite against the word of our mother? Think you we will endure the presence of a heretic, and a propagator of heresy, knowing him to be such? Let him take heed how he approaches us—how he defiles the hem of our garment—how he pollutes our palace. The Grève hath an axe—the Pré-aux-Clercs a stake—Montfaucon a gibbet. He shall have his choice of the three; the sole grace a false and perjured Huguenot may look for at our hands."

"Be all three his portion and mine, if he deceives you, sire," returned the Bourbon. "Let him be summoned. I will abide the issue."

"Be it so," replied Henri Trois, as if he had suddenly decided upon the course he ought to pursue.

"Your guard must seek him within the dungeons of the Louvre," said Crichton. "He is a prisoner."

"A prisoner!" echoed the Bourbon, starting.

"A prisoner!" repeated Henri Trois joyfully.

"He is in the hands of Catherine de Medicis," continued the Scot.

"And the documents?" demanded the King of Navarre eagerly.

"Are also in her majesty's possession," returned Crichton. "Florent Chrétien is adjudged to the stake."

"Will you now forgive yourself, sire?" asked Rosni, in a low tone.

"Away!" ejaculated the King of Navarre, stamping his foot upon the ground with wrath. "Ventre-saint-gris! is this a season for reproaches? Your majesty, I am well assured," he added, indignantly appealing to his royal brother, "will see fit to reverse this most unjust judgment. Chrétien is innocent of all crime."

"Of all, save that of heresy, it may be," returned Henri Trois, "than which no guilt is more heinous and unpardonable in our eyes, and of which, even by your own showing, he is culpable. Our mother has acted in conformity with our wishes, and in furtherance of the interests of the true faith, in condemning this Huguenot preacher to expiate his offences against Heaven at the stake; and, were our sanction needful, it should be readily accorded."

"Vive la messe!" cried the courtiers.

"You hear, brother," said Henri Trois, smiling. "Such are the sentiments of every good Catholic."

"Will you violate the majesty of your own laws, sire?" demanded the Bourbon. "Have you no regard for the sanctity of the pledges voluntarily given for the security of your Protestant subjects?"

"Hæreticis fides non servanda est," rejoined Henri Trois coldly.

"It follows, then, sire," said the Bourbon, "that your royal word passed to me for the liberation of the Princess Esclairmonde is not binding upon your pliant conscience?—ha!"

"Satisfy me that she is a princess, and I will keep my faith with you, albeit you are a heretic, brother. Produce your proofs, and, I repeat, she is free."

"Your majesty may safely make that promise now," returned the Bourbon scornfully.

"If I produce those proofs ere midnight, will you fulfil your word, sire?" asked Crichton, advancing.

Henri Trois was visibly embarrassed.

"You cannot retreat, my liege," whispered the Duc de Nevers.

"But, fair cousin," returned the king, in an undertone, "we would rather part with our crown than Esclairmonde—and this accursed Scot would outwit the devil."

"He will not outwit Catherine de Medicis, sire," said the duke. "I will put her upon her guard."

"How says your majesty?" demanded the Bourbon.

"Our word is already passed," returned Henri Trois.

"Enough!" said Crichton, retiring.

At this moment the Vicomte de Joyeuse approached.

"I am the bearer of a billet from the queen-mother, sire," he said, presenting a sealed despatch to the king.

"Peste!" exclaimed Henri Trois, as he glanced over the contents of the letter. "We have been too precipitate, fair cousin," continued he, addressing the Duc de Nevers. "Her majesty counsels us to treat the Béarnais with all courtesy and consideration."

The duke replied by a shrug of the shoulder.

"Nay, this is not all," added the king, "she entreats us to restore his sword."

"And your majesty will, of course, comply with her request."

"Pardieu! no—cousin."

"Remember the fair Esclairmonde, sire."

"Ah! you are right," returned Henri Trois hastily. "That name at once decides me. I know not what credit is to be attached to this story of the lovely demoiselle's birth. It is possible it may be true. But, true or false, it is plain, if I would hope to succeed in my designs upon her, I must now, more than ever, yield implicit obedience to my mother's behests."

"Wisely resolved, sire."

"A reconciliation with the Béarnais will not be difficult," pursued Henri Trois; "his choler is as readily appeased as aroused. You shall see how easily we will cajole him. A fair word or so will make all smooth between us. Approach, brother," he continued, addressing the King of Navarre in a friendly tone; "I have done you wrong, and am eager to make you reparation."

"Sire!" exclaimed the Bourbon, springing eagerly forward.

"Your hand, brother."

"It is the hand of a heretic, sire."

"No matter! it is a loyal hand, and as such I clasp it. Nay, withdraw it not, good brother. I wish all my court to perceive that we are on terms of amity together—especially my mother," he added, aside.

"Vive le Roi!" cried the courtiers. And the shout was echoed by a thousand voices.

"I have deprived you of your sword," continued Henri Trois. "You cannot reclaim your gift from the Chevalier Crichton. I pray you, therefore, to wear this blade for my sake," he added, unbuckling his rapier, the hilt of which was studded with diamonds, and presenting it to the King of Navarre. "Promise me only that you will not draw it against a subject of France."

"I will wear it for your defence, sire," replied the Bourbon. "Your majesty's kindness will not allow me

for an instant to doubt your sincerity, but I would gladly learn to whom I am indebted for this sudden alteration in your sentiments."

"To one whose intercession you scarcely merit," returned Henri Trois, with a gracious smile—"to the queen-mother."

"*Jour de Dieu!*" exclaimed the Bourbon—"to her!"

"Pardon the unworthy reception I have given you. I was taken by surprise, and could not divest myself of certain misgivings, which this letter has wholly dispelled. I will make the best amends in my power."

"Grant me the life of Florent Chrétien, and we are quits, sire."

Henri Trois was again perplexed.

"His life is in my mother's hands," he said; "make your appeal to her. You stand well with her, it seems. I never interfere between her majesty and the objects of her displeasure. Yet stay! if you can induce this Chrétien to abjure his heresies, I think I may venture to promise you his life."

"You have ratified his doom, sire," said the Bourbon, retiring. "What think you of this change, Rosni?" he added, as he rejoined his counsellor.

"I like it not," returned Rosni. "The friendships of this Vilain Herodes is more to be dreaded than his enmity. But you have confided in him——?"

"*Bon gré, mal gré,*" answered the Bourbon.

"How have I played my part, my cousin?" asked Henri Trois of the Duc de Nevers.

"To admiration, sire," replied the duke.

"You are a flatterer. But I am weary of this conference. Bring forward our captive and his dog. 'Twill divert my thoughts to question him."

"Take heed, compère," cried Chicot; "you will not find that dog so carefully muzzled as the great bear of Berne."

X

The Missal.

"Que toute trahison sur le traître retombe !"

—VICTOR HUGO : *Hernani*.

BLOUNT, who had been strictly guarded during the conference previously detailed, and had endured, with stoical calmness, all the petty persecution, in the shape of taunts and blows, that his captors chose to inflict, was now dragged into the king's presence. Druid followed as closely at his heels as the sash by which he was restrained would permit him to do.

"Before you bestow yon caitiff's head upon the executioner of the Châtelet, my liege," said Joyeuse, "it may be well to interrogate him as to the motive of his daring action. I can scarcely think, with all his reckless courage, that it proceeded from mere bravado. My own opinion is," he added, lowering his voice, "that he is charged with a message to the Béarnais—in which case your majesty may elicit some important information from him."

"I will essay, mon enfant," replied Henri Trois ; "but I despair of success. Look at his stubborn visage and resolute bearing, and say if threats are likely to shake him ? That man would perish rather than play the traitor."

And so it proved. Blount refused to return other than a surly monosyllabic response to the monarch's inquiries.

"Remove him to the Grand-Châtelet," said Henri Trois impatiently, "and let the question ordinary and extraordinary be proposed to him."

"It will extort nothing," rejoined the Englishman firmly.

"I was right, you perceive, *mon cher*," said the monarch, turning to his favourite.

"I will find a way to wring his secret from him, my liege," replied the vicomte. "I see where his vulnerable point lies."

And he whispered to the king.

"You have hit it," returned Henri, laughing. "But proceed not to extremities."

"Leave him to me, sire," said Joyeuse. "Draw thy sword," he added, addressing the man-at-arms by whom Druid was guarded, "and upon each interrogation which this obstinate traitor may decline to answer, hew a limb from his hound."

The weapon of the halberdier flashed in the air.

"Devils!" cried Blount, in a voice that sounded like the roar of a lion, at the same time exerting himself with so much force as to burst asunder the leathern thong that confined his arms. "What would you have me do?"

"Reply, without disguise, to his majesty's interrogations," said Crichton, advancing towards him.

"Well, then," returned Blount, "to spare my dog unnecessary suffering, I will do that which I would not have done to preserve my own flesh from the hot pincers, or my bones from the grinding wheel—I will speak—though, by the rood! I have nothing to reveal. I might have borne to see Druid perish," he muttered, "but to behold him die by piecemeal — no — no — I could not endure that."

"What brought thee hither, thou contumacious varlet?" demanded Henri Trois. "Wert thou not aware that thy life would pay the penalty of thy rashness?"

"I was fully aware of the consequences of the step I took," answered the Englishman. "But the desire to serve a friend was paramount to any consideration of danger."

"What friend, sirrah?"

"I have been too bold, perhaps, to term him such," returned Blount; "but death levels all distinctions, and mine is so near at hand, that I may claim some exemption from worldly forms. My fidelity will, I nothing doubt, ensure me a worthy place in his remembrance."

"Thy devotion to whom, sirrah?" demanded Henri Trois impatiently. "To the King of Navarre?"

"To the Chevalier Crichton, sire?"

"To Crichton!" echoed Henri, in astonishment. "Morbleu! Joyeuse," he continued, addressing the vicomte, "this Scot exercises an unaccountable influence over his fellows. Here is a sturdy knave, who derides the dungeon and the rack, ready to lay down his head for the love he bears him. By what magic is this accomplished?"

"By the magic of manner, sire," returned Joyeuse; "was ever smile beheld so captivating—was ever demeanour witnessed at once so courteous and so dignified, as that of Crichton! Add to the charm of manner, the ennobling and heroic spirit of chivalry breathing from his lightest word and action—weaving its spell around him, and inspiring all who approach with kindred ardour, and you have the secret of his witchery over the minds of men. It was the same with Bayard—the same with Du Guesclin—with Charlemagne, and with Godefroy de Bouillon. Some men there are for whom we would willingly live; others for whom we would as readily die. Crichton is among the latter."

"You have merely drawn the distinction between friendship and devotion, mon cher," replied Henri, turning, with a look of displeasure, towards Blount. "Thy intelligence must have been of vital import, sirrah," he added, pursuing his inquiries, "since it could not be delayed till the jousts were ended?"

"My errand was nothing more," answered Blount

carelessly, "than to apprise the Chevalier Crichton that a packet on which he set some store, and which, after incurring various risks, had been strangely found, was again as strangely lost."

"Is this all thou know'st concerning it, *mon maître*?"

"I know that it has proved a fatal charge, sire. All who have meddled with it have come to ill. It was lost, as it was won, at the point of the sword. 'To the breast of him who first grasped it, it brought a poignard; to the next who received it, the stake; and to myself, it is like to bring the axe. May like calamity alight on her into whose possession it hath now fallen!"

"Your majesty will, perhaps, next question him as to his acquaintance with the contents of the packet?" interposed Crichton.

"By no means," returned Henri, frowning. "I perceive your drift, and have heard enough to convince me that the testimony of this traitor is suborned. *Hola! Larchant*," he continued, addressing one of the officers in attendance, "let the prisoner be conveyed to the *Châtelet*, and thrown into the *Fin d'aise*, where, if he expire not within the week, the headsman may release him from further torture."

"Yours are tender mercies, sire," returned Blount, smiling disdainfully.

"Let the hound be cared for," continued Henri.

"Is he not to go with me?" asked Blount, starting.

"Hence with the prating knave!" exclaimed the king furiously.

Blount suddenly broke from his guards, and prostrated himself at the king's feet.

"I do not ask for mercy, sire," he cried. "I know my life is forfeited, and justly; but oh! separate me not from my faithful companion."

Henri wavered. If he had a heart, it lay on the side on which the Englishman now assailed him.

"Thou lov'st thy dog?" he said musingly.

"Better than my life."

"'Tis a good sign!—Thou should'st be honest. I cannot, however, grant thy request. Refusal here is mercy. The poor animal would only howl beneath thy carcase; and it may console thee to learn, that in changing masters, he will find one who will not value him less than thou dost, while he is better able to protect him. Stand back! *mon maître*."

"My dog is no courtier," replied Blount, rising; "he will serve no second master. What ho! Druid."

This summons, followed by a short sharp whistle, brought Druid instantly to the Englishman's feet. The scarf was round his throat; and in his teeth he held a large fragment of the apparel of the man-at-arms, which he had torn off in effecting his liberation.

"I knew no bonds would hold thee, brave fellow," said Blount, caressing his dog, who, in his turn, fondly licked his master's hand. "We must part, old comrade."

Druid looked wistfully in his face.

"For ever," said Blount slowly, "for ever!"

"Away with him," cried Henri, "but take heed you harm not the dog. I would not lose that noble animal for a prince's ransom."

"A moment, sire, and he is yours," ejaculated Blount, over whose open and manly countenance a sullen cloud had now spread. "It is hard to part with a friend whom one has long cherished. This dog," he continued, with difficulty mastering the emotion, which was proclaimed by sundry twitches at the corners of his mouth, "will feed from no hand but mine; will answer to no call but mine; will fight at no bidding but mine. I must teach him obedience to his new master. You will find him tractable enough when I have done with him."

"I will take every care of him," said Henri, somewhat affected by the scene.

"Fare thee well, Druid!" murmured Blount; "and now," he added gently, "lie down, old friend."

Druid crouched upon the ground.

Swift as thought Blount placed his foot upon the dog's body, as if about to crush him to the earth, and with both hands seized the scarf entwined round his throat. Though he perceived the action, and might have guessed its intent, Druid offered no resistance. His eyes were fixed upon his master. The noose was tightened, and in another instant the fate of the brave dog would have been sealed, but for the intervention of Crichton, who forcibly arrested the Englishman's arm.

"Desist!" he whispered. "I promise to despatch him, if aught befall thee."

"You promise more than you can perform sometimes, Chevalier Crichton," returned Blount sullenly. "You undertook to free me from any peril I might incur in the execution of your orders. My head is now within reach of the axe."

"Thy own madness has brought it there," rejoined Crichton sternly. "Release thy dog, or I abandon thee to thy fate."

Blount, with some reluctance, relinquished his hold of the scarf.

"Where is the missal which I entrusted to thy care?" continued the Scot.

"Where you placed it—next my heart; where it will remain while that heart beats."

"Saint Andrew be praised!" exclaimed Crichton joyfully. "Anticipating they would search thee, and discover that book upon thy person, I allowed matters to proceed thus far. But no injury should have been done thee. Deliver it instantly to the king."

Crichton retired, and Blount drew a small richly gilded volume from his doublet. "Sire!" he said, addressing Henri Trois, "this book, confided to me by the Chevalier Crichton, dropped from the folds of the

packet about which you have just questioned me. It was committed to my charge because, upon ascertaining it was a mass-book of the Romish Church, Messire Florent Chrétien refused to receive it. I am a Catholic. And were I not, I have no such scruples. It would seem to belong to your majesty. The vellum cover is emblazoned with a royal crown—with the lilies of France, and with the letters C and H."

"Pardieu! it is our mother's missal," exclaimed Henri Trois, "it is her cipher linked with that of the king our father. Give me the book, Du Halde."

"Your majesty will not touch it," said the Duc de Nevers, turning pale; "it may be poisoned."

"I will be the first to open it, if you have any such apprehensions, my liege," interposed Crichton.

"I have no fear," replied the king. "From these pages I derive health and succour, not bane. Ah! mon Dieu!" he exclaimed, as his eye rested upon a leaf on which certain mysterious characters were traced. "Have I chanced upon the serpent's nest?"

"What have you discovered, my liege?" asked Joyeuse.

"A plot!" vociferated Henri Trois; "a conspiracy against our crown—against our life!"

Universal consternation prevailed amidst the assemblage. Many mysterious and suspicious glances were interchanged by the nobles, and a look of intelligence passed unobserved between Crichton and the King of Navarre.

"By whom is this plot contrived, my liege?" asked the Duc de Nevers, with quivering lips.

"By whom think you, monsieur le duc?—by whom think you?" thundered the king.

"By the Guise?"

"By our father's son—by the Duc d'Anjou."

There was a deep silence, which no one cared to

break except the Bourbon, who coughed slightly in an ineffectual attempt to conceal his satisfaction.

"I have long suspected my brother's treachery," said Henri, after a pause, during which he appeared greatly disturbed; "but I have here evidence of his guilt under his own hand."

"Is it a letter you have found, sire?" inquired the Duc de Nevers anxiously.

"Ay, my cousin," returned the king, in a deep whisper, "it is a letter!—a letter from Anjou to our mother—a letter of treason and blood penned upon these sacred pages—a letter devised by the demon, inscribed upon the word of God!"

"It is a forgery, my liege. The Duc d'Anjou is incapable of a crime so monstrous and unnatural. I will answer for his innocence with my head."

"Answer for yourself, monseigneur," replied Henri, in a freezing tone, at the same time speaking in a voice so low as to be inaudible to his attendants, "you will find it no easy matter. The characters in which this letter is traced reveal the writer. They are secret characters, known only to myself—my mother—and this arch traitor. They were contrived for the security of my own despatches from Poland, when Charles stood towards me as I now stand to Anjou; and when my mother betrayed him as she has here betrayed me. These characters cannot have been fabricated, neither can they be deciphered without a key. Look at this writing! To you it is incomprehensible as an Egyptian hieroglyphic: to me legible as the billet of a mistress. And see! a leaf is wanting. Where was our mother's letter—here is Anjou's answer. Jesus-Maria! if I had any doubts left, this would remove them. I am doubly betrayed."

"My gracious liege——"

"Anjou is guilty of *lèze-majesté* and felony in the highest degree—and shall die the death of a traitor—

as shall all who have favoured, or are engaged in this foul conspiracy—even though I flood the Louvre in the noblest blood of France. The scaffold and the block shall not be removed from these courts, nor shall the headsman cease his labour till he has utterly exterminated this hydra-headed monster of rebellion. Hitherto I have been easy, forgiving, merciful. It has availed nothing. Henceforth I will be relentless and inflexible. The ordinance of my ancestor, Louis the Eleventh, which condemns him who is guilty of misprision of treason to like doom with the traitor, is not yet abrogated. You have answered for Anjou with your head. Take heed I claim not the pledge. It is already forfeited.”

“Your suspicions cannot attach to me, sire,” faltered De Nevers. “I have been your loyal follower ever.”

“My suspicions!” echoed the king, in a tone of irony. “*Par la Mort-dieu!* monseigneur, I suspect you not—I am assured of your treachery.”

“*Malédiction!* this to me, sire?”

“Be patient, fair cousin. Another such intemperate exclamation, and my guard shall conduct you to the Bastille.”

“Your menaces alarm me not, sire,” replied the duke, who had now recovered his composure, “conscious as I am of my innocence, and of the groundlessness of the charge preferred against me. The name of Gonzaga has never yet been coupled with that of traitor. Were I aware of any conspiracy against your majesty, I would denounce it, though my own son were its leader. And if I should march hence to the scaffold with which you have threatened me, my last prayer should be for the uninterrupted prosperity and long continuance of your reign.”

“Judas!” muttered the king, between his teeth; “the plot is better organised and nearer its outbreak than I deemed it, if he is thus confident. I must pro-

ceed with greater caution. *Qui nescit dissimulare, nescit regnare.* Vive-dieu, cousin," he continued, placing his hand familiarly upon the duke's saddle-bow, and regarding him with a look, in which distrust was skilfully veiled by an expression of friendliness, "your warmth would almost persuade me I have wronged you in suspecting you of defection. If it be so, you will know how to overlook the error. Environed as I am by faction and sedition—surrounded by perfidy in all shapes and all aspects—by rebels in the mask of brothers—traitors under the cloak of counsellors—assassins in the guise of friends; when those I have most loved, most honoured, most rewarded, are the first to desert, to betray me; when those bound to me by the strict ties of duty, and by the stricter ties of affinity, forget alike their allegiance and affection; when the hand that once caressed me brings the poignard to my bosom; and the lips, from which the fondest maternal endearments have flowed, command my destruction, I may be forgiven if I should mistake a loyal follower for a deadly enemy, and for a moment question the stainless honour and mistaken, though not wholly unrequited, fidelity of Gonzaga."

"My services, however requited," replied the duke, with some asperity, "should have secured me from these unmerited taunts. But since they who should be nearest to your highness in your love are visited with the extremity of your indignation, I am content to disregard the affront."

"You do wisely, monseigneur," rejoined the king, with a smile of derision; "I need not remind you this is not the first time I have detected and defeated Anjou's treasonable schemes. I need not tell you of the revolt which was to have followed my return from Poland to the throne of France; of the ambuscade which beset my route; of the assassins who were baulked of their victim. I need not tell you of my brother's

capture, interrogation, and confession ; of the decapitation of La Mole and Coconnas ; and of my mistaken clemency. Catherine de Medicis in those days watched over my safety with zealous care. Now she has instigated a rebellion she was then prompt to crush. Would to Heaven Anjou had yielded to the promptings of his own dark heart, and strangled her, as he intended to do, when she embraced him in his prison at Vincennes!"

"Sire, your resentment carries you too far. Catherine de Medicis is still your mother. To her you owe your crown."

"Oui-dà, monseigneur, and to her, also, I might owe my abdication and dethronement, if she would permit me to finish my term of life in the seclusion of a cloister. Think you I know not whose hand has hitherto grasped the reins of empire—whose voice has swayed my counsels—whose mandates have controlled my edicts—whose policy has influenced my actions? Think you I deemed, when Catherine resigned the regency of this realm to me, she resigned also its sovereign sway? Pardieu! if such has been your opinion, it is time you were undeceived. I owe her much, but she owes me more. I am indebted to her for the name of king: she has to thank me for the powers of royalty. If I have preferred an existence of enjoyment and repose (as much repose, at least, as is ever allotted to princes), to the cares and responsibilities of active government—if I have sought to dispel my ennui by a thousand trifling occupations—if the pursuits of pleasure, the exercises of devotion, the companionship of favourites and of mistresses, have engrossed my attention—though my people may have some reason to complain, my mother has none, because such a course has been consonant to her inclinations. I have submitted all to her disposal. But, if I am rudely awakened from my dream of security—if I find that the arm which defended me has become hostile—that what I have quietly yielded is to be forcibly wrested

from me—that not even the semblance of rule is to be left; what wonder if I start, like one from a trance, and, banishing from my breast all feelings, save those akin to justice and retribution, prepare to wreak my vengeance upon the heads of the aggressors?”

“Calm yourself, my liege.”

“*Tête-et-sang!* I am calm enough, as you will find anon, monseigneur. I pardoned my brother’s first transgression—restored him to my love—bestowed upon him in appanage the dukedoms of Berri and Anjou, the earldoms of Touraine and Maine, and refused only his solicitation for the lieutenant-generalship of the kingdom. I had good reasons for my refusal. I reserved that high post for some adherent, trustworthy and meritorious as the Duc de Nevers.”

“Sire,” replied the duke, in confusion, unable to divine Henri’s real meaning, and fearful of some snare being laid for him, “I have already received too many proofs of your favour.”

“Bah!” exclaimed the king, with ill-disguised irony; “I never till now sufficiently appreciated your services or fidelity. True, I thought, in raising you to your present elevated position—in entrusting my Piedmontese army to your command—in appointing you to the government of Pignerol, Savillan, and La Perose; in placing certain wealthy benefices at your disposal; in granting you a heavy pension from the coffers of the state, and investing you with the cordon of the Saint-Esprit which hangs from your gorget; in doing all this I imagined I had made some slight return for your unremitting zeal and devotedness. But I perceive my mistake. I have yet a greater service to exact:—I have yet a higher reward to offer.”

“The service I can conjecture,” said the duke, after a pause—“the reward——”

“The post I refused to Anjou. My refusal made him a traitor. My grant should make you loyal.”

"Sire !"

"Your brevet shall be signed to-morrow."

"I should prefer it to-day," replied the duke significantly. "To-morrow it may be out of your majesty's power."

"Ha !" exclaimed Henri, with a thrill of apprehension, "is my peril then so imminent? Mary Mother protect me !"

"In the Virgin's name," whispered the duke, "I beseech you to maintain your composure. You are surrounded by the spies of Catherine de Medicis, whose glances are fixed upon your every look and gesture : whose ears are on the alert to catch each word you let fall. Still appear to suspect me, or I shall become as much the object of their vigilance as your majesty. You are on the brink of a precipice. My arm alone can arrest your fall."

"How shall I evince my gratitude?" said Henri, vainly endeavouring to repress his agitation.

"By the fulfilment of your promise, sire."

"Doubt it not—doubt it not, my cousin. You shall have your appointment on my return to the Louvre. I swear it by Saint Louis, my patron ! And now relieve my anxiety. You have put me on the rack——"

"Your majesty must excuse my saying more at present," returned the duke evasively ; "I have already said too much. Your cabinet will be the fittest place for my further disclosures. Here I dare not breathe them. Meantime, do not disquiet yourself. I will answer for your safety."

Henri darted an angry and distrustful glance at the wily De Nevers. "Who will answer for your honesty, monsieur le duc?" he said.

"San-Francesco, my patron," replied the duke, smiling.

"Where is the Prince Vincenzo?" demanded Henri.

"He has been removed by his attendants to the

Hôtel de Nevers," answered the duke. "Heaven be praised, his wound is not dangerous."

"'Tis well!" exclaimed Henri. "And now take heed, cousin. To-morrow you are chief in command of our armies, or," he added, in a deep determined tone, "the Duke of Mantua will have to lament his son and brother."

"As you please, my liege," rejoined De Nevers, with affected indifference. "I have warned you, and you will find my warning fearfully verified if you neglect it. Arouse the suspicions of Catherine de Medicis, and all is lost. Her party is stronger than your own. Her majesty, I perceive," he continued, carelessly looking in that direction, "has quitted the grand gallery. She has remarked our conference, and despatched a secret messenger to ascertain its object. It must be brought to a close. Pardon my freedom, sire. Danger is not ceremonious."

"So I find," said Henri.

"Be ruled by me, my liege," continued the duke, "and your crown shall be preserved without risk—without bloodshed. I will meet plot with counter-plot; stratagem with stratagem; and turn the weapons of your adversaries against themselves. One life only shall be sacrificed."

"The life of my brother?" faltered Henri.

"No, sire, that of your rival in the affections of Esclairmonde, that of the Chevalier Crichton."

"Sang-dieu! though I shall not regret to be freed from a rival so formidable as Crichton, I see not how his destruction will ensure the success of your schemes."

"On him rests the chief reliance of Catherine de Medicis—of the Duc d'Anjou. On him devolves the terrible part of your assassination."

"Jesus!" exclaimed Henri, smelling at a flacon which he took from his escarcelle.

"He must die."

"In Heaven's name let him die, cousin. Order his instant execution, if you think proper."

"In good time, my liege. And now let me counsel your majesty to command some of your youthful nobles and gentlemen to enter the lists, or to engage in such knightly exercises as may induce your lynx-eyed mother and her mouchards to conclude our tête-à-tête has had reference only to the business of the tilt-yard."

"Well thought of, cousin," replied Henri. "But can you not devise some better expedient than the withdrawal of our loyal attendants from our side at a critical conjuncture like the present? I dare not—will not hazard it."

"What say you to a combat of animals, sire?" insinuated De Nevers. "Many months have elapsed since the gentle dames of your court had an opportunity of witnessing a spectacle so delightful. It will afford them the highest gratification, and answer our purpose admirably. Suppose you make trial of the strength and ferocity of the African lion, sent by Philip the Second of Spain, against the tigers lately presented to your majesty by the Grand Signor Amurath the Third, or, if you think that match unequal, against the pack of German wolves——"

"Or Italian foxes," interrupted Henri. "No, De Nevers, were the lion worsted, I should hold it an evil omen. I have often heard of the extreme hardihood of an English bull-dog in the fight; I will now put it to the test."

"Bravo!" exclaimed the duke.

"I have a wild Spanish bull, black as Pluto, and fierce as Chiron," continued the king, "he shall sustain the hound's attack. Bid his keepers bring him forth, and chain him to the stoutest post they can find in the lists. Mort-dieu! 'twill be brave sport," he added, rubbing his hands with pleasurable anticipation.

De Nevers bowed and retired. Henri gazed after him a moment in silence, and then addressing his chief valet, said quickly, "Follow him, Du Halde, and let me know with whom he converses. Take note of all he does. Away!—strange!" he muttered, "everything, whether of love, or peril, in which I am concerned, seems to hinge upon Crichton."

"Not at all, compère," said Chicot, who had overheard the latter part of the monarch's self-communion, "he is your destiny."

"How, gossip?"

"In his hand rest your crown—your life—your mistress."

"Sirrah!"

"Henriot," said the jester, with a look that ill became his wonted laughter-moving visage, "for the first time in my life I am serious."

"And the last, I hope, gossip," returned the king.

"No, compère, I shall be more serious when I am buffoon to François the Third. By my bauble! I had rather they should carve me a monument like that of Thevenin de Saint-Ligier, the faithful fool of Charles the Fifth, at Senlis, than what I fear should happen. And it will happen, unless you profit by my caution."

"And what is thy caution, my poor gossip?"

"Place your faith in Crichton, cher Henriot," whimpered the jester. "Otherwise, I shall certainly lose one of the best of masters, and France will as certainly gain one of the worst of kings."

Struck by the jester's unfeigned, though ludicrous emotion, Henri seemed to reflect for a short time. He then motioned the Scot to approach him. "Chevalier Crichton," he said, "to your charge I entrust this missal. I may require you to produce it hereafter. But understand me, and you too, messeigneurs," he added, looking round, "the suspicions entertained of treasonable intentions on the part of my brother have

been entirely dispelled by the Duc de Nevers. I recall my accusation, and beg you to dismiss it from your remembrance."

A murmur of astonishment and displeasure was heard among the courtiers.

"Have I your majesty's permission to defy the Duc de Nevers to the combat," said Crichton, unable to repress his indignation, "and to extort from his own lips an avowal of his treason?"

"It is needless, *mon cher*. He has cleared himself from all imputation of guilt."

"You are the dupe of this wily Italian, my liege," returned the Scot, with warmth; "he is a felon knight, and disloyal gentleman."

"The duke is absent, *messire*," said Henri, anxious to put an end to the discussion.

"On his return I will hurl the epithets in his teeth."

"Be that task mine," cried Joyeuse. "You have won honour enough. My sword is eager to leave the scabbard."

"I have a vow to defend his majesty against all traitors," exclaimed Saint-Luc, "and claim the right of challenge."

"His be the right who first shall affront the caitiff," shouted D'Epernon, striking spurs into his charger.

"Agreed!" cried Joyeuse, following the baron's example. "We shall see who will be the first in the race."

"Hold! *messeigneurs*," ejaculated Henri authoritatively. "Let no one stir from hence on pain of our sovereign displeasure."

"Vive-dieu!" exclaimed Joyeuse, chafing with vexation. "Your majesty shows more favour to traitors than to your loyal followers."

"Be patient, *mon enfant*," returned Henri smiling

graciously. "Your devotion and that of my other faithful friends shall not be forgotten. Meantime I forbid all further allusion to this matter. After the banquet we shall hold a secret council, at which thou, Saint-Luc, D'Epernon, Crichton, and, I trust, my brother of Navarre, will assist. Till then, keep guard upon your speech and actions. Chevalier Crichton, a word with you."

"By my patron, the Evangelist," said Saint-Luc, shrugging his shoulders, "I am completely in the dark."

"And I," rejoined D'Epernon. "Henri seems bewitched. Like a love-sick damsel, he will—and he will not. He evidently distrusts De Nevers, and yet will not avow his suspicions."

"He has good reasons, doubtless, for his caution," observed Joyeuse. "I will be sworn this false duke has betrayed his own party, and purchased Henri's favour with the heads of his colleagues. I am, moreover, of opinion, that in lieu of a peaceful *mêlée* by torchlight, we shall have a sanguinary conflict with swords and sharpened lances. So much the better! Perish the Medicis and her train of Italian impostors, priests, poisoners, and panders. If we can free Henri's neck from this intolerable yoke, he will indeed become a king."

"And thou?" interrupted D'Epernon, laughing.

"A duke, peradventure," returned Joyeuse. "En attendant, we are to have a duel between two *raffinés* in the art of offence. The horns of the bull will, I trust, avenge the injuries inflicted by the teeth of that accursed hound on my gallant charger Baviéca."

"The hound will be the victor, for a thousand pistoles," cried Saint-Luc.

"I am for you," replied Joyeuse eagerly.

"Let us look at him," said D'Epernon; "methought he was sorely wounded by your men-at-arms."

"That will not prevent his fighting," said Saint-Luc.

"These dogs are the bravest in the world, and will fight as long as life endures."

Upon which the three nobles directed their courses towards the Englishman, at whose feet Druid still crouched.

"What think you of all this, Rosni?" said the King of Navarre to his counsellor.

"That mischief is brewing, sire," replied the baron, knitting his brows, "and that the Valois is either a knave, or a fool—perhaps both."

"It is easy to see that a storm is gathering," rejoined the Bourbon. "But it will pass harmlessly over our heads, and may perhaps facilitate our evasion."

"It may so," returned Rosni gravely.

Henri Trois meantime conferred apart with Crichton. "Guard that missal," he said, continuing his instructions, "as you would the hidden letters of her you love; as you would a tress of her hair, or a glove from her hand; as you would guard holy relic or charmed amulet. I may require it anon."

"I will guard it as I would the honour of her I love, sire," returned Crichton haughtily. "It shall be wrested from me only with life."

"When the bull-fight is ended," said Henri, "depart secretly from the Louvre, and proceed to the Hôtel de Nevers. Here is my signet. Display it to any of the captains of the guard, and such men-at-arms as you may require will attend you. Arrest the Prince Vincenzo——"

"Sire!"

"Interrupt me not. Arrest him, I say, and let him be conveyed in a litter to the palace. I will give orders for his further custody. This done, rejoin us at the banquet."

"Sire," rejoined Crichton, regarding the king with a searching glance, "whatever commands you may impose upon me, I will obey. I would, however,

counsel you to adopt measures widely different. I am at a loss to discover your design. It is unworthy of the grandson of François the First—of the son of Henri the Second. Unmask these traitors, and let them perish by the death they merit. Sever the web they have woven around you with the sword. But do not resort to this perfidious Machiavelian policy—treachery against treachery, in which the winner is the loser—or you will find, when too late, that you are not so profoundly versed in its mysteries, or so intimately acquainted with its thousand shifts and expedients, as the subtle queen with whom you have to contend.”

“We shall see,” replied Henri angrily. “What I now require is obedience, not counsel.”

“*Quicquid delirant reges*,” cried Chicot, who had stolen upon them unawares. “I am now more than ever convinced of the wisdom of the sage who wrote that kings are fools, and fools are kings. Mark the intimate relationship between us.

Kings are fools, and fools are kings,
Majesty does foolish things,
While from folly wisdom springs.
Majesty her sceptre swings,
Folly soon her bauble brings;
Majesty to tinsel clings,
Folly bells of silver rings.
Crowns and coxcombs, fools and kings
Are inseparable things:
Where kings govern Folly rules,
Fools are kings, and kings are fools!”

At this moment a loud bellowing roar, followed by general plaudits, announced the appearance of a new combatant within the precincts of the tilt-yard.

XI

The Bull.

“ J'ay ouy conter que feu son père luy faisoit mesler en tous ses mangiers et boires de la poudre d'or, d'acier et de fer, pour le bien fortifier ; ce qu'il continua si bien jusqu'à l'âge de douze ans, qu'il le rendit ainsi fort et robuste, jusqu'à prendre un taureau par les cornes, et l'arrester en sa furie.”—BRANTÔME : *Hommes Illustres*, Discours lxxxii.

A MENAGERIE, in the olden time, was considered an indispensable appendage to regal state. Sauval relates, that from the reign of Charles the Fifth to that of Louis the Twelfth, there existed in the Rue Froidmantel, immediately behind the Louvre, a building “où soulaient estre les lions du roi.” When the ancient palace of the kings of France was in part destroyed to make way for the magnificent structure erected upon its site by Pierre Lescot, and now known as the Old Louvre, this vivarium, removed to one of the outer courts, was greatly increased by Francis the First, and carefully maintained by his successors.

Here, on grand occasions, conflicts took place between the savage occupants of the various cages, and the atrocities of a Roman amphitheatre were, in some degree, revived. Here the inhuman Charles the Ninth, in whose bosom the soul of Nero was lodged, frequently repaired with his favourites to indulge his insatiable appetite for carnage. Here brilliant crowds assembled ; and the courage and devotion of a lover were sometimes severely tested by his mistress, who, dropping her glove into the scene of strife, made its restoration the price of future favours.

An exploit of this description, attended with more than ordinary peril, marked the commencement of Crichton's amour with Marguerite de Valois. A

combat of animals had been commanded. Scaffoldings, reared around the court, were graced with the flower and loveliness of the land. A fiercely contested fight between the ruler of the forest and the sole disputant of his sway—the striped tiger, had terminated in the defeat of the latter. With mane erect and paw heavily imposed upon the lacerated breast of his antagonist, the kingly brute, still growling with rage, glared defiance at the assemblage; when, amid the hush of silent admiration that succeeded his victory, was heard the light musical laugh of the Queen of Navarre, and the next moment her embroidered kerchief fell at the feet of the slaughtered tiger.

The curiosity of the spectators to ascertain whose faith was to undergo this dread ordeal was not long ungratified. Exclamations of terror burst from many a gentle lip as the figure of a youthful cavalier was discovered within the arena. To the terrible encounter in which he was about to engage, this youth brought only a poignard, and a short Spanish mantle swathed around his left arm. His finely formed limbs had no other defence than was afforded by a rich attire of velvet and saye, while his fair uncovered locks, floating over his shoulders, added to the noble and poetical beauty of his countenance. He looked like Ogier le Danois before the lion-guarded seats of Avalon. With a swift and resolute step he advanced towards his foe, who awaited his approach with grim but majestic composure. He had attained the object of his quest; his foot was placed on the kerchief; his eyes were fixed steadfastly upon the kindling orbs of the lion.

At this juncture—and when scarcely a breath was drawn by the spectators, a page at the back of the scaffold was seized with sudden faintness, and uttered a piercing cry. So absorbing, however, was the interest of the passing scene, that no one heeded him, and he fell back, deprived of sense.

Better had it been for that page he had never revived! Roused by the cry, the lion menaced his fatal spring. With a roar that shook the rafters of the gallery, he prepared to dart upon his intrepid enemy. But the cavalier evaded the attack. As the furious beast bounded against him, he sprang to one side, and, with marvellous force and skill, plunged his dagger deeply into the animal's throat. The wound was not mortal. Lashing his sides with rage, the lion returned instantly to the charge. On this occasion the cavalier flung himself on the ground; and, as the animal passed over his prostrate body inflicted another and surer stroke.

The roseate hue, which, during the combat, had deserted the blooming cheek of Marguerite de Valois, returned with added lustre as the cavalier, on bended knee, shortly afterwards sued for the prize he had so dearly won. Marguerite smiled upon him as she granted his request, as only queens (and queens who love) can smile; and that smile was then in his esteem held cheaply purchased by the hazard he had run.

On the same night the page we have described as overcome by emotion beheld another conflict between the cavalier and the most celebrated duellist of his day, *le bien raffiné* Bussy d'Amboise—at that time the avowed favourite of the Queen of Navarre. In this second encounter he was fortunate as the first. He disarmed and slightly wounded his adversary. Quitting this rendezvous, which took place in a retired walk within the gardens of the Louvre, the cavalier entered the palace, still warily followed by the page. He was admitted, with some mystery, to the apartments of Marguerite de Valois.

Framing a thousand excuses, the page awaited his return within a corridor. It was a night of lengthened torture, for the gallant appeared not till dawn, when,

with a quick and buoyant step, he passed the miserable witness of his *bonne fortune*.

"Why follow you not your master, the *Seigneur Crichton*, good youth?" said Aubiac, *Marguerite's* confidential valet, to the ^{page}, who remained like one stupefied. "The coast is clear—away!"

"Call him not my master," replied the page, bursting into an agony of tears, and tearing his raven curls, "I serve him not—I love him not—I will forget him. As to your royal mistress," he continued, glancing with fury at the door, "may my curse fall upon her; may she endure the anguish I have endured; may she pass one such night as I have passed." And with these words he rushed from the corridor.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Aubiac, "I see how it is—a girl in disguise—over head and ears in love with this handsome Scot, whom all the women rave about, though for my part I see nothing extraordinary in him. However, as *Madame Marguerite* admires him, I suppose he has merits I cannot discover. From henceforth the *Sieur Bussy* is dismissed; and, for three weeks, or, it may be, three days, the *Sieur Crichton* will reign in his stead. *Maugrebleu!* I must take care that pretty vixen does not find her way here again. Of all plagues a jealous woman is the most intolerable; and of all women, your woman of intrigue is the most jealous. *Madame Marguerite* is the most jealous woman I have the honour to know. The malediction of that unhappy damsel is likely enough to attach to her. Where have I seen that lovely face before? Those dark eyes are certainly not unknown to me. She looks like an Italian: ah! I have it—I recollect her. She is the principal actress of the *Hôtel de Bourbon*. A fine girl, i'faith. This *Crichton* is fortunate. I should prefer her to the queen."

Aubiac was right in the conjecture. It was the *Gelosa*.

To return. Within the menagerie previously described the Duc de Nevers sought out the warlike beast destined to sustain the attack of Druid. Captured amid the Sierra Morena, this wild mountain bull—one of the fiercest of his untamable race—was so little subdued in spirit by confinement, that it required considerable address to approach him; and it was only by entirely excluding light from his den, that his keepers were enabled to bind and blindfold him. In this state—now rushing madly forward, now suddenly halting, with lip curled upwards, nostrils distended, head bent down, and tail erect—foaming, butting, bellowing, and leaping—girt, as to his neck and shoulders, with a strong tether of ropes, so disposed, that he could neither break loose from his bondage, nor injure himself by its pressure; the furious animal, exasperated by the shouts of the spectators, reached the middle of the arena, where he was speedily attached to the central and stoutest stake in the lists. This done, the covering was withdrawn from his eyes.

Dazzled by the sudden transition from obscurity to sunshine, the bull appeared for a moment bewildered. He then uttered a sullen, ominous moan, which, in the opinion of the experienced, gave unquestionable assurance of resolution and ferocity. His vigour could not be doubted. In make he was perfect. Broad-chested, wide-fronted, straight-backed, thick-necked, well-hampered—curled, shaggy, tufted; his tremendous energies were plainly written in every limb. In colour, from the points of his short, sharp, wrinkled horns to his pawing hoofs, he was black as the steeds of Pluto. The old Syracusans would have chosen him as an acceptable sacrifice to that deity. Glaring round the assemblage with eyes of flame, tossing the sand over his shoulders, and lashing his sides with his tail, he all at once changed his moan into a fierce prolonged roar

of defiance. This challenge was instantly answered by a growl deep and terrible as his own.

Before, however, we attempt to describe the combat, we will repair, for a few moments, to the outer ranks of the spectators, composed of the burgesses, the scholars, and others of the commonalty of Paris.

"Valeme Dios!" exclaimed a swarthy-visaged knave, with a broad-leaved, rusty sombrero pulled over his beetle brows, pressing forward as he spoke to obtain a nearer view of the bull; "a noble animal, and of good heart, I'll be sworn. He is of the right breed and make. I know his stock well. He comes from the mountains of Estremadura; from the heights of the Guadalcana, where range herds of the finest steers in Spain—ciertamente! I have seen a hundred such, when a grand bull-fight has been held in the Plaza at Madrid, in the presence of his most Catholic Majesty, Don Felipe! and, by the black eyes of my mistress, it was a glorious sight!"

"No doubt of it, most veracious Don Diego Caravaja," rejoined a bystander, turning round, and disclosing the cynical countenance of the Sorbonist. "But what brings you here, my hidalgo? I was told you had entered into the service of Ruggieri, on the last day of his compact with Sathanas, and were to be hanged from the walls of the Grand Châtelet, at the precise juncture that the fagots of the old sorcerer were lighted in the Place de Grève. Pardieu! I am glad to find I was misinformed."

"Never believe idle rumours, amigo," said the Spaniard, twisting his moustache after a threatening fashion; "Ruggieri is free, and the hemp is yet unsown that shall form my halter. I, the familiar of a magician—foh! Hark ye, campanero," he added mysteriously, "I am in the service of the queen-mother."

"You have quitted the devil, then, for his dam," replied the Sorbonist, with a sneering laugh. "But

i'faith, man, whether you have escaped the noose of the hangman, or the clutches of the fiend, I am delighted to see you. I am only sorry we shall lose the agreeable spectacle of your master's—I beg pardon—Ruggieri's execution. Because I had a wager with our comrade, the Bernardin, who stands by my side, that the Prince of Darkness would, as a matter of policy, deliver so serviceable an agent from the midst of his fiery torment."

"Which wager you have indubitably lost, campaign," laughed the Bernardin, "for the black prince has clearly interfered in his behalf by releasing him before he has even snuffed the odours of the resinous torches. Sapristi! I would you had laid a like stake on Caravaja. I should have been a double winner—ho!—ho!"

"Whoso wagereth on my neck, had better look to his own," said the Spaniard coolly, at the same time tapping the hilt of his long Toledo in a significant manner, "or there may be more slitting than choking of weasands. A truce, however, to jesting. I am in no mood for it. In regard to the execution, you will not be disappointed, señors, the Pré-aux-Clercs will not want a bonfire to-night. Ruggieri's name has been erased from the warrant, and that of Florent Chrétien substituted."

"Io triumphe! let me embrace thee for the intelligence," cried the Sorbonist. "I had vowed that old sinner's destruction. Better one heretic should perish than a thousand sorcerers. There is some hope of the conversion of the latter. Besides, it will be a pleasant pastime to him.

Tormenta, carcer, ungulæ,
Stridensque flammis lamina,
Atque ipsa pœnarum ultima
Mors Lutheranis ludus est—
Ridebat hæc miles Dei."

"Chito!" whispered Caravaja, placing his finger on his lips, and again assuming a mysterious air, "this is not the only spectacle you will behold to-night."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the Sorbonist, elevating his eyebrows into an expression of surprise, "what goodly sight is in reserve?"

"May I trust you?" demanded the Spaniard, yet more mysteriously.

"You may, if your disclosure be not treasonable," returned the scholar, mimicking the tone and gesture of his companion.

"Treasonable or not, I will confide in you," replied Caravaja, in a low voice; "see you these rose-nobles?" he added, thrusting his hand into his doublet, and exhibiting, under the shadow of his cloak, which he held over them, a glittering handful to the greedy eyes of his companion.

"Whose throat are you bribed to cut?" asked the Sorbonist spitefully.

"Thine, if thou amendest not thy speech, amigo. But listen to me, and I will tell thee how to replenish thine empty pouches. I have discovered the true El Dorado. Lend me thine ear."

The Sorbonist complied. He soon became deeply interested in Caravaja's communication.

"And is this to take place to-night?" he inquired, as the Spaniard concluded.

Caravaja nodded.

"And the whole court is to be turned topsy-turvy?"

Caravaja nodded again.

"And thine office—our office, I should say—if I join you—is—the word sticks in my throat—the assassination of Crichton?"

Caravaja nodded for the third time, adding a slight cough, by way of emphasis.

"By Barabbas! I like it not," said the Sorbonist, as if struck with contrition. "I would not stick at a

trifle, but this is crime on too grand a scale for my fancy."

"Choose," returned Caravaja, pointing alternately to the purse and poignard. "I have but to name thee to one of Catherine's mouchards, of whom there are plenty around us, and the chances are shrewdly against thy reaching the Sorbonne in time for vespers."

"Of two evils the wise man electeth the lesser," replied the scholar. "After all, one king is as good as another. *Le roi est mort—vive le roi!* I am with you. I will be a conspirator. There is something antique and Roman in the idea of overthrowing a tyrant. It will be as amusing as the *jeu de coupe-tête*."

"Bueno!" exclaimed the Spaniard, "to-night thou shalt help to rid us of a foe. To-morrow thou may'st, peradventure, fill the place of one of these minions of the Sybarite. The scarf I will give thee anon. The word is——"

"Hark!" cried the Bernardin, interrupting their conference. "The sport is about to begin. You will lose it altogether, if you stand so much aloof. May the devil direct the bull's horns to the heart of that accursed hound for the fright he gave me at the disputation yesterday!"

Leaving these worthies to struggle for a good station to view the fight, we shall now return to the arena.

Druid, meantime, had not remained inactive. No fiery champion ever evinced more impatience at the sound of hostile bugle than he displayed on hearing the roaring challenge of the bull. His fury could scarcely be restrained; and his efforts to break loose became, at length, so violent, that Blount was compelled to take him in his arms, and forcibly restrain him. Covered with dust and blood—the thick gore slowly dropping from his unstanched wounds, his head swollen and his right eye closed—the poor brute presented a deplorable spectacle. But neither suffering nor ex-

haustion affected his courage—he was still fierce and terrible as heretofore. To the questions put by the youthful nobles, by whom he was surrounded, the Englishman refused all response, until the Vicomte de Joyeuse casually remarked, “that it was impossible the dog could fight long in that condition—he must speedily give in.”

A slight smile of derision passed across Blount’s features.

“I would I were as sure of my freedom as I am of Druid’s endurance,” he said. “He is thorough-bred. And I would stake my life—if my life were my own to stake—that when once he has pinned the bull, nothing will move him. You may hew him in pieces, from tail to jowl; and, while life lasts, the fangs will cling.”

The nobles were laughing loudly at this boast, when Henri Trois, attended by Crichton, who still continued on foot, approached.

“Thy hound is in a sorry condition, maître,” said the king, in a compassionate tone; “dost think he will face his foe?”

“I am assured of it, sire,” replied Blount.

“Thou hast vaunted his courage,” continued Henri; “if he is victorious, I give thee free pardon. If he loseth the battle, thou diest.”

“I am well contented,” answered the Englishman.

The monarch and his retinue then proceeded to take up a position immediately in front of the bull, leaving an interval of some ten paces between them and the enraged animal, who eyed their movements with a look of malignant curiosity, redoubling his clamour, and vainly endeavouring to disengage himself from his bondage. All at once he became still—his glaring orbs seemed fascinated; he ceased bellowing; and, giving a loud snort that scattered the foam over his dusky shoulders, lowered the points of his horns.

The spectators next beheld a man, bearing a dog in

his arms, advance from the ranks. At his approach the bull brought his broad front almost to a level with the sand.

Like his antagonist, the dog had left off growling. There was something formidable in the sudden silence of these two savage beasts, who had up to that moment filled the tilt-yard with their roaring.

Arrived within fitting distance of the hostile party, Blount deposited his burden upon the ground.

"Upon him!" he cried; "thy country's honour is at stake."

But Druid stirred not.

"How, sir!" exclaimed Blount angrily; "has thy valour degenerated since I brought thee to this craven country? Ha, I see," he added, changing his manner, "I am to blame, not thou." Upon which he clapped his hands together smartly, twice or thrice, and uttered a shrill and peculiar cry.

Exasperated by these sounds, the bull slightly raised his head. The instant he did so, Druid, who had watched his opportunity, sprang furiously upon him, and made good his hold by fixing his teeth in the thick and fleshy covering of his antagonist's eye. Bellowing with rage and pain, the wounded animal sought to free himself from his persecutor, by violently dashing his head to the earth, plunging it between his legs, shaking and tossing it in the air. His efforts were in vain. Crushed, bruised, and gored, Druid relinquished not his gripe.

The spectators were in ecstasies. Henri Trois laughed till the tears filled his eyes. The Bourbon, who stood on his right hand, appeared equally to enjoy the spectacle.

"By my bauble!" cried Chicot, thrusting himself between the steeds of the two monarchs, "'tis royal sport and worthy the illustrious beholders. A goodly conclusion to a chivalrous spectacle—ha—ha! The

sotie after the tragedy—the charivari after the widow's espousals. May it end as well as it hath begun! Yon huge cornuto," he added, darting a malicious glance at the King of Navarre, "appears, as yet, to have the worst of it."

"Rail on, knave," returned the Bourbon, laughing good-humouredly; "thou art welcome."

"Fear me not," rejoined Chicot, "I am of the bulldog breed myself:

Ut canis a corio nunquam absterrebitur uncto,

I never relax—once bite, hold tight. Attend!

The horns of a bull,
The sword of a fool,
The heels of a mule,
Make a King of Misrule.
But of crown should he be shorn,
Who weareth wittol's horn;
Better queen had never suckled him,
Than other quean should cuckold him!"

The jester did not wait to see what effect these ribald strains produced upon the subject of his satire, but, diving under the charger of his own sovereign, disappeared.

A loud shout was now raised. The bull had obtained a momentary advantage over his assailant. By a tremendous effort—attended with considerable detriment to his own hide—he succeeded in dislodging Druid, whom he flung to a great height above his head. Fortunately, the brave hound escaped the deadly points that awaited his descent, but he fell so heavily to the ground, that few imagined he would rise to renew the conflict: an opinion which was further strengthened when the bull, bending his knees, dropped upon Druid's body before he had time to recover himself, and strove to crush him by his ponderous weight. At this juncture the voice of the Englishman was heard in encouragement of his luckless companion.

"What ho! Druid—what ho!" he cried; "bestir thyself, or the knees of that accursed brute will force all the breath from thy body. By Saint Dunstan! I can scarcely forbear my hand. Up! man—and rouse thee—or it is all over with both of us."

Henri Trois was no less disturbed.

"Mort-dieu!" he ejaculated, "the brave hound will be slain, and I shall lose one who might have proved my trustiest follower. Fool that I was to command this fight."

"Had you not better throw down your warder, gossip?" said Chicot, suddenly appearing on the left hand of the king; "the chivalrous bull will probably attend to your behests—and withhold the stroke of mercy. Down with it!—the base cur yields."

"'Tis false, thou yelping limmer, he does not yield," exclaimed Crichton, who, stationed also on the left of Henri Trois, had watched the contest with lively interest. "See'st thou not the maddened beast hath, in the blindness of his fury, driven his horns deeply into the soil, and not into the dog's reins? And mark how Druid struggles with his huge oppressor, like Typhon with the rocks of Jove—or Hercules with the Creton bull. Look! he has extricated himself!—ha!—bravely done! bravely done!—to the assault! staunch hound—to the assault! Fix thy keen and tenacious fangs within his leathern nostrils. 'Tis done!—'tis done!—there thou wilt cling till thy foe sinks from exhaustion. The victory is thine. By Saint Andrew!" he added, with warmth, "I would rather assail the bull myself, than that noble hound should perish."

"Your assistance is needless," replied Joyeuse, whose hilarity, occasioned by Druid's recent perilous position, had become overcast by the present aspect of the fray; "I fear I shall lose my wager as well as my charger."

"Certes, if you have backed the bull, you will in-

fallibly lose," said the Scot, laughing, "for see! even now he staggers, and exhibits symptoms of faintness."

"There I differ with you, *mon cher*," rejoined the king; "to me he appears as if he were collecting his energies for some mighty effort. Remember, this is no stall-fed, scant-winded steer."

Druid, as will have been gathered from the foregoing discourse, had again made good his hold upon the nostrils of his antagonist; and such was the effect of his combined weight and strength, that he contrived to detain the bull, for some space, in the kneeling posture he had just assumed. No sooner, however, did the latter animal regain his feet, than nigh frantic with wrath and agony, he resorted to every expedient that desperation suggested, of freeing himself from his relentless assailant. Worn out, at length, with repeated fruitless attempts, he became comparatively tranquil; and it was this cessation from strife that Crichton had construed into relaxing energy, but which was rather, as the king had surmised, the preparation for a mightier struggle.

"Saint George for England!" shouted Blount, whose sanguine anticipations had also deceived him—"the victory is ours. A few minutes must decide the conflict—hurrah!"

But the next moment the Englishman's countenance fell—the smile of exultation fled from his lips. He perceived his error. Renewing the combat with a fury that showed his vigour was undiminished, the bull tore the ground with his hoofs—filled the air with his blatant cries—tossed his head as if a thousand hornets were buzzing about his ears—and shook the stake to which he was attached, as if he would uproot it.

"*Cornes de Diable!*" screamed Chicot; "'tis a pleasant sight to witness the fantastic gambols of yon amiable beast, and equally diverting to listen to his music. Fore heaven, he danceth the couranto



The Bull.



more deftly than the Chevalier Crichton—ha!—ha!—ho!”

“Is the fastening secure, think you, *mon cher Crichton*?” said *Henri Trois*, noticing with uneasiness the violent strain produced upon the rope by the ceaseless struggles of the bull.

“Have no fear, sire!” returned the Scot, advancing a step or two in front of the king. “I will place myself between your majesty and the possibility of harm.”

“Gramercy,” rejoined *Henri*, smiling graciously; “and, calling to mind your former exploit in the Court of Animals (which, *en passant*, cost me somewhat dear in the life of my noblest lion), I cannot doubt your ability to cope with a beast of inferior power; I shall, therefore, rest under your protection as securely as behind a rampart.”

“Vivat!” cried *Joyeuse*, “the bull wins!”

“And the calf,” added *Chicot*.

As he spoke, the applauses, resounding on all sides, were suddenly checked, and a wild cry of alarm, mingled with screams from the female portion of the assemblage, arose. *Druid* was again tossed aloft, and the bull, instead of awaiting his fall to gore and trample him as heretofore, gave a headlong dash of such force that the rope, though of almost cable thickness, snapped in twain close to his throat, and thus liberated, the animal commenced a mad scamper on the arena. The first obstacle he encountered was *Blount*, whom he instantly overthrew. He paused not, however, to molest him, but rushed in the direction of *Henri Trois*.

“The king!—the king!” cried a thousand eager voices. “Save the king!”

But this seemed impossible. Ere a pike could be hurled, a bolt fired, or a sword drawn, the bull had reached the spot occupied by the monarch, and *Henri*’s destruction would have been inevitable, if an arm of

iron had not interposed between him and the danger with which he was menaced. That arm was Crichton's, who threw himself unhesitatingly upon the furious animal, and, seizing his wrinkled horns, by the exertion of his almost superhuman strength arrested his career.

Amid the turmoil that ensued, the voice of the Scot was heard sternly exclaiming, "Let no one touch him—I will achieve his subjection alone."

Thus admonished, the crowds, who had flocked to his assistance, drew back.

The struggles of the bull were desperate, but unavailing. He could neither liberate himself, nor advance. Suddenly, from acting on the defensive, Crichton became the assailant. Calling into play all the energies of his muscular frame, he forcibly drove his opponent backwards.

"It is time to bring this conflict to a close," he thought, holding the bull's head immovably with his right hand, while with his left he sought his poignard.

He then glanced towards the king. Surrounded by the bristling halberds of his guard, Henri looked on at his ease.

"Pollicem verto," cried Chicot, "let him despatch his enemy, compère."

The royal assent given, scarce another moment elapsed before the bull, mortally wounded by a blow dexterously stricken between the vertebræ of the neck, fell to the ground. Thunders of applause succeeded.

The royal cortège then formed into two lines, and Henri rode forth to greet his preserver.

"Chevalier Crichton," he said, "to you I owe my life. No Valois was ever ungrateful. Claim some boon, I pray you, at my hands."

"Sire," replied Crichton, smiling, as he unhelmed himself to wipe the dust and heat from his brow, "my demands will not exhaust your treasury. I ask only the life of that man," pointing to Blount, who, with

folded arms and a dejected air, stood alternately regarding the carcase of the bull and Druid, who, stunned by his fall, had with difficulty limped to his feet; "he will suffer punishment enough in the mortification occasioned by his dog's defeat."

"It is yours," replied Henri.

"Your majesty will not separate the faithful hound from his master?" continued the Scot.

"As you please," sighed the monarch. "I cannot refuse your request." Crichton threw himself upon his knee, and pressed Henri's hand gratefully to his lips.

"My thousand pistoles, Saint-Luc," said Joyeuse gleefully.

"They are not fairly won," replied Saint-Luc. "I appeal to D'Epernon."

"'Tis a drawn wager," returned the baron; "and in future I recommend both of you to back a Scottish right arm against bull or bull-dog."

XII

The Prize.

"Quand ilz furent tous devant sa presence,
Et à genoulx pour sa face choisir,
Le roy d'armes en très grant révérence
Lui dit ce qu'il s'ensuit, et a loisir :
Sire, avecques le vostre bon plaisir
Et licence d'autre part obtenue,
La pastourelle est devant vous venue
Pour le grant pris delivrer orendroit
A celui qui sans doutance y a droit,
Et de dehors deservi l'ara mieux."

—LOUIS DE BEAUVEAU : *Le Pas de la Bergière.*

Two sergeants of the guard now advanced, leading a steed, to which the carcase of the slaughtered bull was promptly attached by means of cords, and dragged out of the arena.

A pursuivant-at-arms, clothed in a sumptuous casaque flowered with the lilies of France, next approached; and, reverentially inclining himself before Henri, demanded, in the name of the Queen of the Lists, his majesty's license to close the jousts. Permission being graciously accorded, the pursuivant, accompanied by a couple of trumpeters, who gallantly did their devoir, proceeded towards the pavilions, and removing the shields of the combatants, delivered that of Crichton to his esquire. This done, the judges of the field, marshalled by Montjoie, descended from their tribunal, and gravely directed their course towards the grand gallery, into which they were ceremoniously ushered.

Crichton, meantime, looked on in silence. Indescribable emotions swelled his bosom. The stirring notes of the trumpet rekindled all his fire. Much as he had done to distinguish himself, he burnt for new opportunities of displaying his prowess, and would gladly have splintered another lance in honour of the bright eyes he worshipped.

"What would life be," ran his self-communion, "without ambition—without fame—without love?—hopeless slavery—and prolonged torture. I for one could endure not its burden. My life shall be computed by days, not years; with me hours shall play the part of days—moments of hours. I will crowd into each moment as much of active existence as that moment will comprehend, nor will I know pause till fate shall for ever check my impulses. I reverence age; but I desire not its honours. I would rather die covered with glory than bowed down by years. Were I to perish now, I should have lived long enough. And if I can achieve the deliverance of her, to whose love my heart is forbidden to aspire—but for whom alone it can ever beat; if I can free yon brave monarch from his thralldom; and that inconstant, yet not ungenerous

voluptuary from the peril in which he stands—I care not if this day be my last.”

As these thoughts swept through his mind, the countenance of the Scot—ever the faithful mirror of his emotions—took a slight cast of sadness; and Henri, inspired by jealousy, having narrowly scrutinised his features during this momentary reverie, fancied he could detect the secrets of his inmost soul.

“It will not do to trust him,” thought the king; “his passion is stronger than his loyalty. Hola, Chevalier Crichton,” he added aloud, in a tone of raillery, “while you are studying your next ode, or preparing a thesis for the schools, we, less philosophical, less poetical mortals, are dreaming only of the speedy appearance of the Queen of the Lists to award the chief prize of the tourney. I have some notion upon whom it will be bestowed. Attend me to the tribunal. Lover as I am of etiquette, it would ill become me to break through prescribed forms upon an occasion like the present, when I have fairer dame to grace my lists than ever yet rewarded valour, and braver knight to receive the meed of victory than ever yet won prize from dame!”

With this high-flown compliment, Henri rode slowly towards the canopy, where he dismounted, and took his seat upon the fauteuil, placing the King of Navarre on the tabouret at his right. Crichton remained standing on the lowest step of the scaffold.

Presently the inspiring bruit of clarions and other martial instruments was heard from that quarter of the tilt-yard in which the grand gallery was situated. The barriers were hastily removed; the halberdiers ranged themselves en haie; and admittance was given to a troop of fair equestrians, whose personal charms were scarcely less to be apprehended than the weapons of their knightly predecessors. At the head of this radiant band, which, like the burst of a sunbeam, diffused smiles and animation as it proceeded, three figures were dis-

tinguished, each so beautiful, yet each so different in style of beauty, that the admiration of the beholders was divided, and the judgment perplexed, as to whom the palm of surpassing loveliness ought to be assigned. In the fine and delicate features, the exquisite fairness of complexion, the soft blue eyes and gentle regards of her who rode on the right, the spectators recognised and hailed their queen, the virtuous but lightly esteemed Louise. In the fuller form and more majestic deportment; in the ravishing grace, the jetty tresses, and dark languid glances of the queenly dame on the left, no one failed to detect the gorgeous Marguerite de Valois. Murmurs of impassioned homage pursued her. The very air respired of love as she passed; and there was not a cavalier of the thousands who gazed upon her, but would have perilled his life for a favouring regard. Marguerite, however, was insensible to the general idolatry. A smile was on her lips; witchery was in her looks; but in her heart raged the undying worm of jealousy.

Between the two queens, on an Isabelle-coloured palfrey, richly caparisoned with blue velvet bordered with pearls, rode Esclairmonde; and if a preference was shown by the assemblage, it was towards the lovely princess, whose attractions, although they did not excite the fiery admiration roused by the voluptuous fascinations of Marguerite de Valois, awakened a sentiment of far deeper devotion. Immediately behind this captivating trio rode Catherine de Medicis, who displayed the admirable symmetry of person for which she was celebrated—a charm not to be impaired by time—as well as the proficiency as an equestrian, for which she was equally noted, in the management of a fiery Arabian. In the languishing looks of the beautiful blonde, on the left of the queen-mother, the King of Navarre was at no loss to discover his new conquest, La Rebours; while, in the sprightly brunette

at her right, admirers, too numerous to particularise, claimed a more intimate acquaintance with Torigni.

Preceding the Princess of Condé, and bearing a white wand, together with the grand prize of the tourney, a magnificent diamond ring, which he ostentatiously displayed to the spectators, marched the pursuivant. The judges of the camp, headed by Montjoie, and followed by a band of pages and trumpeters, brought up the rear of this brilliant cavalcade.

Arrived within a short distance of the royal canopy, the jocund troop came to a halt, and formed a long line in front of the king, of which Esclairmonde constituted the centre. Rapid as thought, the page of each dame, attired in her colours, then advanced, and placed himself at the bridle of her steed. Executed with great precision and quickness, this manœuvre produced an agreeable effect, and was loudly applauded by the gallant Bourbon, whose eye wandered over the fair phalanx in a manner that plainly evinced of what inflammable material his valiant heart was composed.

"Ventre-saint-gris!" he ejaculated; "such a legion would be irresistible." Just then his ardent gaze chanced upon his queen. "Peste!" he added, averting his glances, "the snake will always intrude itself into Eden."

It was, in sooth, a pleasant sight to look upon that array of lovely dames (Catherine's famous "*petite bande*"), and to mark their different attractions, now so forcibly, yet so advantageously, contrasted—each acting as a foil to the other—each unconsciously contributing to her neighbour's fascination. Oh! how various are the aspects of beauty—how beautiful are all its aspects!

Making his way through the press, Montjoie now bent the knee before Henri, and repeating a formula similar to that of the pursuivant, entreated permission

for the Queen of the Lists to award the prize to him who had demeaned himself the most valiantly in the jousts ; concluding with the almost unnecessary assurance, that all would be done “ with loyalty and justice.” To this solicitation Henri vouchsafed a gracious response, and the king-of-arms having fulfilled his duty, retired.

Holding the bridle of Esclairmonde’s palfrey, the pursuivant next led her towards Crichton, who, perceiving the intention of the princess, advanced to meet her, and threw himself at her feet. Taking the ring from the pursuivant, Esclairmonde then placed it upon the finger of her lover. The Scot joyously arose. The reward to which he looked forward with most eagerness was yet to be conferred.

Amid the thunder of acclamations that succeeded, the voices of the heralds were heard exclaiming, “ A Crichton !—a Crichton !—largesse ! largesse ! ”

The Scot motioned to his esquire. Raising the shield of his master, the youth filled it with broad golden pieces, which he distributed amongst the officers of the tilt-yard, who thereupon redoubled their joyous vociferations.

While this was passing, Montjoie, with stately step, drew near the principal group of this vast and resplendent picture.

“ Remove your helm, Sir Knight,” he said ; “ the Queen of the Lists desires to thank you for the fair courses you have run in her honour, and to bestow upon you the priceless reward of your prowess.”

A deep blush mantled Esclairmonde’s cheek as Crichton obeyed the injunctions of the king-of-arms. The next moment he felt the glowing lips of the princess pressed upon his brow. That salute annihilated all his prudential resolutions. He forgot their disparity of rank—his own danger—her perilous position. He did not relinquish the hand she had confided

to him—but, in the delirium of the moment, raised it to his lips.

Esclairmonde was equally agitated. Suffused with blushes, and anon becoming white as marble, palpitating, faint, she could scarcely maintain her seat upon the unruly palfrey: and, in order to prevent mischance, Crichton deemed it necessary to pass his arm around her waist. The situation was rather embarrassing, and awakened the ire of the two monarchs.

“Esclairmonde,” whispered Crichton passionately, “you are mine.”

“I am—I am,” returned the princess, in the same tone. “I would abandon my newly discovered title—my rank—life itself, rather than my love.”

“I have the queen’s assent to our espousals,” rejoined Crichton, in an altered voice. “She has promised me your hand—on certain conditions.”

“On what conditions?” asked Esclairmonde, tenderly regarding her lover.

“Conditions which I cannot, dare not fulfil—conditions which involve the sacrifice of my honour,” replied Crichton gloomily. “Esclairmonde,” he added, in accents of despair, “the dream is past. You are the Princess of Condé. It is madness to indulge these vain hopes longer. I may serve you, but I may not love you—farewell!”

“Stay!” exclaimed the princess, detaining him with a gentle grasp. “I have a painful, a dreadful duty to fulfil to-night. I have to take an eternal farewell of one who has been a friend, an adviser, a father to me.”

“Of Florent Chrétien?”

“Intelligence of the martyrdom to which he is adjudged by the merciless Catherine has just reached me. An hour before midnight I shall be within his cell to receive his parting benediction,” she added, with some hesitation, and gazing at the Scot with eyes that swam with tears.

"Were it to encounter certain destruction I would be there," returned the Scot fervently.

"And you will encounter certain destruction if you carry this presumptuous passion further, Chevalier Crichton," said Henri of Navarre, advancing towards them. "You cannot plead ignorance of the exalted station of the maiden to whose love you aspire. The bright blood of the Bourbon will never mingle with that of a Scottish adventurer. Your pardon, fair cousin," he continued, addressing Esclairmonde in a conciliatory tone, "it is with extreme reluctance that I interfere in an affair of the heart. I would rather forward a lover's suit than oppose it, especially the suit of a cavalier so accomplished as Crichton. But I must act as the Prince of Condé would have acted. Take this decision, then, from his lips. The daughter of Louis of Bourbon can only bestow her hand upon her equal."

"The daughter of Louis of Bourbon will only bestow her hand upon him she loves," returned Esclairmonde, with a spirit such as she had never before exhibited; "and your own experience of her race will inform you, sire, that her heart is as little likely to be controlled as her hand."

"As I expected," rejoined the Bourbon: "but it cannot be. It is one of the curses of exalted birth, that the hand and the heart can never go together."

"And why should they be divided in this case," asked Catherine de Medicis, advancing, "if my consent be given to the match?"

"For a sufficient reason, madame," said Henri Trois, joining the group; "because our pleasure is otherwise; and because we forbid the Chevalier Crichton, on pain of banishment from our presence—from our kingdom—as he would escape the doom of a traitor, and a dungeon within the Bastille—again to approach the Demoiselle Esclairmonde in the character of a lover.

We shall see whether he, or you, madame, will venture to disobey us."

"Henri!" exclaimed Catherine in amazement—"this to me?"

"You are our mother—but you are also our subject, madame," returned the king coldly. "We have issued our commands—it is for you to see them obeyed."

Catherine did not reply. Her glance fell upon Crichton, and an almost imperceptible smile passed across her features. At the threat of the monarch the Scot's hand instinctively sought his poignard, upon the hilt of which it now rested. When too late he perceived his error, and the false constructions put upon the action by the queen.

"If you will set at rest the question as to the illustrious birth of the Demoiselle Esclairmonde, madame, I am content to obey the mandates of the king," said Crichton. "On your decision," he added, with a significant look, "must rest her fate."

"The time is arrived for the acknowledgment of her birth, which you have truly said is illustrious, messire," replied Catherine, glancing triumphantly at her son. "Esclairmonde is a princess of the blood royal of France. She is a Bourbon. Let the King of Navarre take note of my words; let all remember them; and let those who reverence the memory of Louis the First, Prince of Condé, incline themselves before his daughter."

Obedient to the intimation of Catherine, a crowd of nobles pressed forward to kiss the hand of the newly discovered princess; and many there were, who, upon that occasion, forgot their ancient enmity towards the great champion of the Protestant Church, in the admiration excited by his lovely descendant.

"Well, sire," said the Bourbon, turning to Henri Trois, "I have found the princess. Of course you will find the convoy."

"Peste!" exclaimed Henri angrily. And motioning

to Du Halde, he issued his commands to close the jousts.

"The princess is yours," said the queen-mother aside to Crichton.

This assurance, however, gave little encouragement to the Scot. He felt that his passion was hopeless. And the despair which love without hope must ever inspire took possession of his soul.

The flourish of trumpets which immediately succeeded, afforded some relief to his oppression. Silence being proclaimed by this warlike prelude, the pursuivant advanced, wand in hand, and uttering thrice the preliminary "Oiez," informed the noble assemblage that the jousts were brought to a conclusion—that his majesty bade them all to the banquet within the Louvre—and that in lieu of the emprise of the Châtel de la Joyeuse Garde, and the grand mêlée by torchlight, the king would hold a masque and fête within the palace.

This announcement was received with general surprise and chagrin.

"How is this, my son?" said Catherine, in a troubled voice. "Have you abandoned the chivalrous spectacle to which you looked forward with so much pleasure? Methought you were about to exhibit your own matchless skill as a tilter in the courses à la foule."

"Par la Mort-dieu! madame," replied the king, in a tone of raillery, "the masque will be more in character with the strange scene we have just witnessed than the mêlée. Besides, the tilt-yard is not the theatre for our display. The lists are unlucky to our race. We remember our father's fate—and shall in future avoid the lance."

"Ha! betrayed," muttered Catherine. "But the traitor shall not escape my vengeance."

"To the Hôtel de Nevers, mon cher," said Henri, turning to Crichton, "and arrest the Prince of Mantua."

Interfere not with our passion," he added, in his blandest accents, "and we have no favour to refuse you."

Amid renewed fanfares of trumpets, the splendid assemblage then separated. But the troop of laughing dames did not return in the strict array it came. The ranks were disordered, and in place of a page, by the side of each bright-eyed equestrian rode a favoured cavalier. Henri Trois took the lead with the reluctant Princess of Condé; the Bourbon attached himself to La Rebours; while Crichton returned to the pavilion, where the armourer proceeded to free him from his knightly habiliments.

As the two monarchs quitted the tilt-yard, loud shouts were raised of "Vive le roi! vivent les rois!"

"You hear, Rosni," said the Bourbon, addressing his counsellor. "Vivent les rois! 'tis a good augury."

By-and-by three figures alone remained within the precincts of the arena.

"Since the *mêlée* is abandoned, thy scheme falls to the ground, my *hidalgo*," said the foremost, who was no other than the Sorbonist.

"Perdition!" exclaimed Caravaja, twisting his moustache, after his wonted ferocious fashion. "I know not what to think of it. I would give my soul to Sathanas, that that accursed Scot should fall in my way."

"The compact is concluded," said the Bernardin, "for, lo! he appears."

And as he spoke, Crichton, attired in a *pourpoint* of velvet and short Spanish mantle, issued from the pavilion. He was followed by Blount, bearing Druid carefully in his arms, and directed his steps towards the outer court.

"After him," cried Caravaja, drawing a knife, and placing it in his sleeve. "A muerte!"

XIII

The Dungeon.

Paolo. Aurait-il abjuré ?

Elci. Pas encore.

Paolo. Mais cet acte il n'est que différé ?

—CASIMER DELAVIGNE : *Une Famille au temps du Luther.*

THE Louvre once enclosed within its walls a number of subterranean cells, appropriated to the confinement of prisoners of state. Into one of these gloomy receptacles Florent Chrétien had been thrust. Deprived, by the rigour of his persecutors, of the consolation which had ever been afforded him in hours of affliction by reference to the "healing balm" of Scripture, the good man passed the brief space allotted him on earth in deepest prayer. As the time drew nigh when his dreadful sentence was to be carried into execution, his devotions were interrupted by the entrance of one of the hooded officials, who introduced a masked female into the dungeon, and then silently departed. The dull light of a brazen cresset suspended from the ceiling imperfectly illumined the apartment, and a few moments elapsed ere Chrétien, whose eyes had been closed in earnest supplication, could distinguish the muffled object that stood before him.

"Is it you, my daughter?" he asked, as the figure remained stationary.

"It is," replied Esclairmonde, unmasking; "but I feared to disturb your devotions."

"Approach," rejoined the preacher; "your name has mingled with my prayers, let your voice also ascend with mine towards the throne of mercy. The sand of my life is almost run out. Each moment is precious. I have much counsel to give you. But ere I offer such

precepts for your guidance as may be needful for the spiritual welfare of one whose passage will be longer than mine own through this Vale of Tears, I would fain invoke a blessing on your head."

Esclairmonde knelt by his side. The benediction was besought and bestowed. The voice of the princess joined in the fervent petition for heavenly grace that succeeded. Scarcely, however, was their devout employment brought to a close—scarcely had the holy man begun to address himself to those instructions which he deemed necessary to impart to his religious pupil, when the door again opened, and the hooded official having introduced another figure enveloped in a large mantle, departed as noiselessly as he had entered the chamber.

"He comes!" cried Esclairmonde.

"The executioner?" asked Chrétien calmly.

"The Chevalier Crichton," returned the princess.

"He!" exclaimed Chrétien, a slight shade passing across his benevolent countenance.

"He is here to bid me an eternal farewell," sighed Esclairmonde.

"Princess of Condé," said the preacher, with some severity, "it must be an eternal farewell."

"You have said it, good father," replied Esclairmonde, in a tone of sorrowful resignation.

"Your rank forbids an alliance so disproportionate, even if the Chevalier Crichton's religious opinions coincided with your own," pursued Chrétien.

"Alas!" murmured Esclairmonde, "our creeds are adverse; a wide disparity of rank exists between us; but our hearts are indissolubly united."

"You love him then most tenderly, my daughter?"

"Love him!" echoed the princess passionately. "Father, to you I look to strengthen me in the resolution I have taken. This interview is my last."

"I will not fail you, my daughter," replied the old man kindly. "Think only that he is the enemy of your

faith; and that were you united to him he might interfere with the important services it may hereafter be in your power to render to your persecuted Church. The thought that will most alleviate the anguish of my latest moments is, that I have sown the good seed within your bosom, which, in due season, shall bring forth a plenteous harvest for our suffering people. Princess of Condé, promise me solemnly that you will never wed a Romanist."

"Esclairmonde!" said Crichton, advancing.

"Hesitate not," said the preacher severely, "or you are lost. Promise me."

"My soul is wedded to the Reformed Faith," replied the princess firmly; "and I here vow never to bestow my hand upon a Catholic."

"Amen!" responded Chrétien fervently.

A deep groan burst from the bosom of the Scot.

"Chevalier Crichton," said Esclairmonde, "you have heard my vow?"

"I have," replied the Scot mournfully.

"Hear me yet further," continued the princess. "My zeal—my love—my gratitude prompt me to lay aside feminine reserve. When I desired that our final interview should take place in the presence of this reverend man, it was that I might address you freely; it was that I might avow my love in the presence of one whose holier aspirations have not rendered him insensible or indifferent to the frailties of his fellows; it was," she added, with some hesitation, and blushing deeply as she spoke, "in the hope that our united efforts might induce you to embrace the religion I profess; and that as convert to a faith, the purity of which your severest judgment must acknowledge, I might, without violation of my conscientious scruples, though in disregard of the elevated position I am compelled to assume, offer you my hand, and request him from whose lips I have imbibed the precepts of truth

and humility, which inspire me at this moment, to affiance us together before heaven."

"You have spoken with a voice of inspiration, my daughter," said Chrétien, with a benignant smile, "and I have offered no interruption to your words, because they flow from a source whence true wisdom only springs. You have appealed to me in a manner which I cannot resist. Your heart, I know, is already betrothed to the Chevalier Crichton. Let him cast off the bondage to which he has so long heedlessly subjected himself. Let him not view religion through the medium of the senses, but by the purer light of the sacred Scriptures. Let him abjure the errors and idolatries of Rome, and exert the mighty intellectual powers with which he has been entrusted for the noblest purposes from on high, in the advancement of the true faith, and your betrothment shall not, for one moment, be delayed."

"Crichton," inquired Esclairmonde tenderly, "is this our last meeting, or are we for ever united?"

"It is our last," replied the Scot, in a despairing tone, "if the condition annexed to the continuance of our love be my apostasy. Esclairmonde, for you I would make any sacrifice consistent with honour and rectitude of principle. For you I would resign those projects of ambition which have hitherto engrossed my soul; for you I would repress that desire for universal distinction, which has ever formed the ruling passion of my existence; for you I would be aught but a renegade to my faith—a traitor to my God. Glory has been my guiding-star; my gaze has been steadfastly fixed upon it; I have steered my bark by its rays. Fame is dearer to me than life; love is dearer than fame; but honour is dearer than love. Listen to me, Esclairmonde. You are the Princess of Condé. Your rank is the most illustrious in France; but that rank has had no influence in engaging my affections. My heart was yours

when our stations were supposed to be equal ; my heart is yours now a barrier is placed between us. I can neither cease to love, nor feel increase of passion. To me you are unchanged. To me you are the orphan *Esclairmonde*. Rank can add nothing to your beauty, as it can detract nothing from it. To link my fate with yours was to realise the wildest dream of my youthful imagination. It were to attain at once the goal to which I have aspired. It were to raise me to the proudest pinnacle of felicity to which man may attain."

"Reflect !" said Chrétien.

"I have reflected," returned the Scot. "Think not my fixed resolve upon a point involving my eternal welfare has been the result of inconsiderate caprice ;—think not because I have clung to the faith of my fathers, through trials, of which this, though the severest, is not the most formidable—think not it has been from a perverse adherence to wrong ; think not, because you are strong in your own belief—a belief which I regard as false and pernicious—that I am not equally inflexible. I have disputed on the tenets of my faith with my sage preceptor, Buchanan, and he has failed to convince me of my errors. I am a Catholic from conviction ; and as such, am as fully prepared as yourself to embrace the alternative of death rather than departure from that religion which is derived from truth, and sustained by holiest tradition."

"If the great Buchanan has failed to work your conversion, my son, my endeavours must prove ineffectual," returned the preacher, shaking his head ; "nevertheless, I will essay——"

"It is in vain," replied Crichton sternly. "My martyrdom is past—yours is to come, old man. I have twice endured temptation to-day—I have twice resisted it. The hand of the Princess of Condé was to have

been the price of my disloyalty—the same hand has been made a lure to drag me to perdition.”

“Say rather to direct you to salvation,” rejoined Esclairmonde. “Oh! Crichton, if I have any influence over your heart, I would now exert it—if, as the humble instrument of the Divine will, I can wean you from the dangerous and idolatrous creed to which you are bigoted, the whole of my future life shall evince the extent of my gratitude and devotion.”

“Esclairmonde,” exclaimed Crichton mournfully, “for that creed I have quitted my father’s roof—for that creed I have braved a father’s malediction—for that creed I now renounce all I hold dear on earth. We must part for ever.”

“Crichton, you love me not!”

“Let the sacrifice I have just made attest my love,” returned the Scot bitterly. “Tempt me not, Esclairmonde. My bosom is torn asunder by conflicting emotions—my brain reels—I cannot support this struggle longer. Your own lips shall seal my fate.”

“Be mine, then.”

A shudder ran through Crichton’s frame.

“I am lost,” he murmured.

“No, you are saved,” replied the princess triumphantly; “kneel with me at the feet of this holy man.”

“Hold!” exclaimed Chrétien. “Gladly as I would number the Chevalier Crichton among the faithful servants of the true God, his conversion must be accomplished by other influence than that of the passions. Evil means cannot work good ends. The faith which is not the result of conviction is little better than hypocrisy. Differing as I do with him upon essential points of religious credence, I applaud the Chevalier Crichton’s constancy;—nor would I attempt to shake it save by arguments such as my brief span of life will not permit me to employ; and I

must think better of a creed which can strengthen the bosom of one so young against snares and temptations that hoary zealots might have found it difficult to resist."

"Your hand has arrested my downfall, good father," said Crichton.

"I rejoice at it, my son," replied the preacher. "Fly while your resolution still continues. I would not incur your reproaches. You must part from the princess, but not, I hope, for ever. A time—not far distant—may arrive when your opinions will undergo a change, and when she may bestow her hand without violating her sacred promise."

A tear stood in Esclairmonde's eye as she regarded her lover, and, unable to control herself, she fell into his outstretched arms.

"When I uttered that fatal vow, I pronounced my own sentence of death," she cried.

"Alas!" returned Crichton, "I would have prevented it—but it is now too late."

"It is," rejoined Chrétien, in a severe tone. "Depart quickly. You interrupt my devotions. I would prepare for eternity."

"Father," said Crichton, "I trust you will have a longer period for that preparation than your persecutors would allow you. Your life is of more consequence than mine; the services which you can render the Princess Esclairmonde are greater than I can render her. Live, then, for her."

"You speak in parables, my son," returned the preacher, in surprise.

"Take this mantle and this ring," said Crichton, "and your evasion is easy. It is the signet of the king. Display it to the guard at the portals of the Louvre, and the gates will fly open at your approach. Waste no time, but muffle up your features and figure in this cloak."

"And you?"

"Heed me not. I will remain here in your stead."

"I cannot accept freedom on such terms, my son."

"Hear me, good father," replied Crichton earnestly. "You go not forth alone. Esclairmonde must accompany you. If she returns to the masque she is lost."

"Gracious Heaven!" exclaimed the preacher.

"Henri's plans are so contrived that she cannot escape him. The King of Navarre is the dupe of his royal brother, and will unwittingly increase the risk, if not precipitate the fate of his new-found cousin, in the wild scheme he has devised for her flight. Catherine de Medicis is occupied with her own dark designs. But she will not interfere with, if she declines to forward, those of her son. An hour hence the Louvre may be the scene of fiercest strife. But an hour hence it may be too late to save the princess from dishonour."

"And your life will be the sacrifice of your devotion!" said Esclairmonde. "No, I will rather return to the banquet, and place myself under the protection of Henri of Navarre."

"He is unable to protect you," replied Crichton. "Fear nothing for me."

"Why should you not accompany the princess, Chevalier Crichton?" asked the preacher.

"Question me not, but go," replied Crichton hastily; "her life—her honour is endangered by this delay."

"I will not consent to your destruction," said Esclairmonde passionately.

"You destroy me by remaining," rejoined Crichton: "a moment more, and it may be too late."

As he spoke, the iron door revolved upon its hinges,

and a huissier, bearing a flambeau, entered the cell, and in a loud voice announced "The king."

Accompanied by Marguerite de Valois, Henri Trois immediately followed this announcement. A malicious smile played upon the features of the monarch as he noticed the dismay of the group at his appearance. "You were right in your conjecture, sister," he said, turning to the Queen of Navarre; "our stray turtle-doves have flown hither. The prison of a Huguenot is as favourable, I find, to the assignations of love as the bower of a Phryne. Messire Florent Chrétien might, perhaps, have found fitter occupation for his latest moments than to assist at such a rendezvous. But it is quite in character with his doctrines. His meditations, however, shall not be longer disturbed. The damps of this cell strike chilly on my senses after the perfumed atmosphere I have quitted. Princess of Condé," he continued, advancing towards Esclairmonde, who recoiled at his approach, "the masque claims your presence."

"Sire," replied the princess firmly, "I will rather remain a captive for life within this dungeon than return to your polluted halls."

"Obey him," whispered Crichton; "I may yet be able to deliver you from this perilous strait."

"Our attendants are at hand, fair cousin," said the king significantly; "I neither mean to detain them as prisoners, nor to endanger my own health, by longer continuance in this unwholesome vault."

"Go, my daughter," said Chrétien; "the Power that watches over innocence will protect you. Fear nothing."

"Your hand, fair cousin," said Henri impatiently.

"Your majesty will not refuse to conduct me to the King of Navarre?" said Esclairmonde, reluctantly complying with the monarch's request.

"Of a surety not," rejoined Henri, smiling; "but

you will find him so completely engrossed by the languishing regards of La Rebours, that he will scarcely desire your company."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the princess, starting.

"Chevalier Crichton," said Henri, pausing, "you have disobeyed our injunctions. Henceforth you are banished from our presence."

"Henri," interposed Marguerite de Valois, "for my sake overlook his fault."

"For your sake, Marguerite!" returned the king, in surprise; "a moment ago you would have changed his banishment to death."

"Tax me with inconsistency, if you will; but grant my request."

"Souvent femme varie," returned Henri, laughing; "be it as you please. To banish him from the revel might tend to throw a shade over its gaiety. Retain him by your side, and I am content. Allons."

"Marguerite," said Crichton, as the Queen of Navarre took his arm, "your generosity has saved your brother's crown."

"If it has revived your love I am satisfied," returned Marguerite tenderly.

"You may revive it, my queen," said Crichton.

"In what way?" demanded Marguerite, trembling with eagerness. "But I can guess. You require my assistance to free the Princess of Condé from her present danger. You shall have it."

"Yours is a noble heart, Marguerite."

"It is a faithful and a fond one, Crichton. Trifle not with its tenderness."

"If I survive this night, my life is yours."

"Survive it, Crichton!—what mean you?"

"I am half distracted, Marguerite. But linger not. Henri is already gone."

"And Esclairmonde," added the queen, with a look of jealous reproach.

Many minutes had not elapsed after their departure, when Chrétien, who had again addressed himself to his devotions, was aroused by the harsh voice of the hooded official, who commanded him to arise. The good man instantly obeyed. The cell was filled with a crowd of figures in sable robes and masks.

"Thy last hour is come," said the official.

"I am prepared," returned Chrétien, in a firm tone. "Lead me forth."

While the hands of the preacher were bound together, the voice of a priest, who formed one of the dismal group, thundered forth the following psalm:—"Exurge, quare obdormis Domine? exurge, et ne repellas in finem: quare faciem tuam avertis? oblivisceris tribulationem nostram: adhæsit in terra venter noster: exurge, Domine, adjuva nos, et libera nos."

Chrétien was then conducted through a variety of intricate passages to the edge of the Seine, now lighted up by the lurid glare of the torches borne by the expectant crowds on the other side of the river, and being placed in a bark was rowed swiftly over to the Pré-aux-Clercs, where a fierce shout of exultation welcomed his arrival.

"Kindle the pile," shouted a thousand voices; "let the heretic die!"

"We are starved to death," cried the Sorbonist, "and want a fire to warm us—to the stake—quick—quick!"

Death to the Huguenot!—fagot and flame!

Death to the Huguenot!—torture and shame!"

The red glare which shortly afterwards tinged the inky waters of the Seine was the reflection of Chrétien's funeral pyre.

XIV

The Conspiracy.

“Dis-moi, mon maître, comment crois-tu que finira cet imbroglio?”
—L. VITET: *Les Barricades.*

WHEN the royal party returned to the masque the festivity of the evening was at its height. The music was breathing its softest strains—the cavaliers were whispering their most impassioned love speeches—the dames were making their tenderest responses. The universal freedom that prevailed gave the revel somewhat of the character of an orgie. Esclairmonde shrunk back as she beheld the license of the scene, and would have retreated, had retreat been possible. But Henri hurried her quickly onwards.

“The King of Navarre is seated near yon beaufet,” he said; “his right hand grasps a goblet, while his left is passed around the waist of his mistress. We shall be rather in the way. No matter. I am ready to commit you to his care.”

Esclairmonde hesitated.

“At all events, we had better wait till he has finished his song,” continued Henri; “for it is evident from his gestures that he is pouring forth his passion in verse. In the meantime, you will oblige us by resuming your mask, fair cousin.”

As the princess complied with the monarch’s request, Henri of Navarre arose. Taking the hand of his partner, he hastened to join the dancers, and was quickly lost to view.

“You must, perforce, remain with me a few moments longer,” said Henri; “let us take our station within yon embrasure, whence we can command the room, and as soon as the bransle is ended, I will summon the Béarnais to our presence.”

Esclairmonde suffered herself to be led towards the window. As they proceeded thither, Henri ventured to take her hand within his own.

"Sire," she said, gently endeavouring to withdraw it from his grasp, "I will only consent to remain with you, on the condition that you do not renew the suit which has hitherto so much distressed me."

"Your condition is a hard one, fair cousin, but I will strive to obey you."

The princess looked around for Crichton. Amid the crowd of gay masks, however, that surrounded her, she could not discern his stately figure, or that of Marguerite de Valois. "He has left me," she mentally ejaculated; "that royal siren has regained all her influence over his soul."

Henri divined her thoughts. "My sister has imposed no such condition on her lover as you would impose on me, fair cousin," he said. "Their quarrel is evidently arranged, and he is restored to his old place in her affections."

"Sire!"

"They have disappeared. Shall we pay another visit to the oratory?"

"Suffer me to join the queen-mother, sire. I perceive her majesty in the further salon conversing with the Duc de Nevers."

"With De Nevers!" repeated Henri angrily. "No, *ma mic*, I cannot part with you thus. I have a word or two to say respecting this admirable Scot. A little more this way, fair *coz*. I would not be overheard. What if I tell you that Crichton's life hangs on your compliance?"

"His life, sire!" gasped Esclairmonde.

"Your hand alone can arrest the sword that trembles o'er his head."

"You terrify me, sire."

"I would not do so, *mignonne*," replied Henri; "on the contrary, I wish to reassure you. Princess," he

added passionately, "it is in your power to save him."

"I understand your majesty," said Esclairmonde coldly.

"Not entirely," returned the king; "you may divine my motive, but you scarcely, I think, foresee the proposal I am about to make to you. I must premise by recounting the history of my earliest amourette. Renée de Rieux, my first mistress, before I beheld her, had disposed of her heart to Philippe Altoviti."

"Spare me this recital, sire."

"She is now his consort. You love the Chevalier Crichton. On the same terms you shall be his bride."

"I am the daughter of Louis of Bourbon, sire."

"The Chevalier Crichton shall be a peer of France."

"Were the King of France to sue for my hand I would refuse him!" replied Esclairmonde haughtily; "let him seek out his minions among those complaisant dames who, because he is a king, have nothing to refuse him."

"You have sealed your lover's fate, fair cousin," rejoined Henri. "Du Halde," added he, motioning to the chief valet, "bid the Duc de Nevers attend us."

"Sire," said Esclairmonde, becoming pale as death, but speaking in a firm tone, "take heed how you proceed to extremities. I am a woman, and a threat from me may weigh little with your majesty. But if, from mere jealous anger, and on no just ground, you adjudge a knight, loyal and true as Crichton, to a shameful death, such vengeance as one of my sex may take, I will have. Look to it, sire. My threat is neither an idle nor a light one."

"Par la Mort-dieu!" exclaimed Henri; "if I had entertained any doubts as to your origin, fair cousin, the spirit you have just displayed would have removed them. The fire of the old Bourbons is not extinct. I accept your defiance. Crichton dies—or you are mine. Decide, for here comes his executioner."

"I answer, as the Chevalier Crichton would," replied Esclairmonde, "death rather than dishonour."

Whatever reply Henri meditated was cut short by a merry peal of laughter from a party of frolic dames, who occupied a fauteuil near them, and the voice of the Abbé de Brantôme was heard reciting the following lines, which produced a very edifying effect upon the fair auditors :—

LOVE'S HOMILY

Saint Augustin, one day, in a fair maiden's presence,
Declared that pure love of the soul is the essence !
And that faith, be it ever so firm and potential,
If love be not its base, must prove un-influential.
Saint Bernard, likewise, has a homily left us—
(Sole remnant of those, of which fate hath bereft us !)
Where the good Saint confers, without any restriction,
On those who love most, his entire benediction.
Saint Ambrose, again, in his treatise, "De Virgine,"
To love one another is constantly urging ye ;
And a chapter he adds, where he curses—not blesses—
The ill-fated wight who no mistress possesses !
Wise De Lyra, hereon, makes this just observation,
That the way to the heart is the way to salvation ;
And the further from love—we're the nearer damnation !
Besides, as remarks this profound theologian,
(Who was perfectly versed in the doctrine Ambrogian)—
He who loves not, is worse than the infamous set ye call
Profane, unbelieving, schismatic, heretical ;
For, if he the fire of one region should smother,
He is sure to be scorched by the flames of the other !
And this is the reason, perhaps, why Saint Gregory
(The Pope, who reduced the stout Arians to beggary)
Averred—(keep this counsel for ever before ye)
That the lover on earth has his sole purgatory !

PERORATION

Let your minds then be wrapp'd in devout contemplation
Of the precepts convey'd by this grave exhortation ;
Be loving, beloved, and never leave off—it's
The way to fulfil both the law and the prophets !

To return to Crichton. Upon entering the grand salon the Scot detached himself from Marguerite de Valois, and hastily resuming his mask, proceeded with a quick step in the direction of the queen-mother. Catherine, at that moment, was engaged in deep conference with the Duc de Nevers, and the Scot was enabled to approach her unperceived. Stationing himself behind a pillar, his quick ear failed not to catch each word of their discourse, though it was carried on, for the most part, in whispers.

"And the Duc d'Anjou, you say, madame, alarmed at the discovery of his letter contained in the missal, has quitted the Louvre without striking a blow?" said De Nevers.

"The moment I received your billet I despatched it to him by a faithful messenger," returned Catherine. "Apprehensive of discovery, he fled."

"Confusion!" muttered the duke; "his head was to have been the price of my lieutenant-generalship. Henri will dare nothing against the queen-mother."

"You are thoughtful, Monsieur le Duc," said Catherine suspiciously.

"I am full of regret that our plot is defeated," replied De Nevers.

"It is not utterly defeated," answered the queen.

"Indeed!"

"What Anjou dared not do I will execute alone."

"You, madame?"

"Failing in my attempts upon the honesty of our incorruptible Scot, I have found a hand as sure as his, and less reluctant. Hold your partisans in readiness, De Nevers. Henri dies to-night."

"And your majesty can fully rely upon the instrument of your will?"

"Fully," replied Catherine; "he is a Spanish bravo, accustomed to the use of the stiletto—and will not need to repeat the blow."

"'Tis well," rejoined the duke—"and the signal?"

"Will be the king's assassination," said Catherine. "Mark me, De Nevers. I will contrive that Henri and Crichton shall enter the oval chamber together. The assassin is already posted behind the arras. As the king passes he will strike. Do you and your attendants rush in at the cry and despatch the Scot. Hew him down without mercy. Henri's death will lie at his door."

"It shall be done, madame."

"Ah! here comes Du Halde. We must separate."

Possessed of the plans of his enemies, Crichton hastened back to Marguerite de Valois, who awaited his return with impatience. "To the oval chamber, my queen," he said, "quick—quick."

"Wherefore?" demanded Marguerite.

"Henri's life is menaced by an assassin," replied Crichton. "I must seek him, and apprise him of his danger."

"Henri is there already," returned Marguerite. "He has this moment entered that chamber with Esclairmonde."

"Ha!" exclaimed Crichton, darting from her; "I may be too late to save him."

It will be necessary to return for a moment to the Princess of Condé. After rejecting Henri's proposal in the disdainful manner described, and in order to escape from his further assiduities, while he lent an attentive ear to Brantôme's homily, Esclairmonde retired into the embrasure, and throwing open the window, stepped forth upon the balcony. A terrible spectacle was presented to her view. In the midst of a bright and spiring flame which mounted high in the still air of night, brilliantly illuminating a confused mass of threatening figures, hung a black and shapeless object. The princess turned aside in horror. Just then a loud exulting roar arose from the multitude. The remains of the martyred Chrétien had dropped into the devouring element.

Esclairmonde heard no more. She fell, without sense, into the arms of Henri, and, by his command, was instantly conveyed to the oval chamber.

When Crichton arrived at the doors of this chamber he found them closed. Two huissiers stationed before them peremptorily refused him admittance.

"Follow me," said Marguerite de Valois; "I will show you a secret entrance to the room."

Passing through a suite of apartments with the rapidity of thought, Crichton and the queen reached a small ante-chamber, in the corner of which a suite of tapestry having been removed by Marguerite, a masked door was disclosed. Another valve admitted them to the oval chamber.

"Help!" exclaimed Henri, who, pursued by Caravaja with a drawn dagger in his hand, flew in the direction of the sound, "an assassin! help!"

"Sangre di Dios! I have missed my first blow," cried the Spaniard, catching hold of Henri's mantle—"but this shall find the way to thy heart, tyrant."

But as he uttered the words, the sword of Crichton passed through his body, and he fell heavily upon the person of the king, which he deluged with his blood.

"Crichton!" exclaimed Esclairmonde, aroused from her insensibility by Henri's outcries, "ah! what do I behold?—the king assassinated?"

"No, fair cousin," replied Henri, extricating himself with difficulty from the gripe, which death had not relaxed, fixed by the Spaniard upon his cloak. "The Virgin be praised, I have escaped without injury—though not without alarm. Chevalier Crichton, let those doors be thrown open."

The command was obeyed; and the monarch, pale, trembling, and covered with blood, was revealed to the general gaze. By his side stood Crichton with his

drawn sword in his hand, still giving ghastly evidence of the execution he had done. Amid the universal consternation that prevailed, the voice of the Duc de Nevers was heard exclaiming—

“The king is mortally wounded—the assassin stands before us. It is Crichton. Slay him! Cut him in pieces!”

“Hold!” ejaculated Henri, checking the movement of this faction. “I am unhurt, messieurs,” he continued, addressing the guard; “I command you to attach the person of the Duc de Nevers, whom we accuse of *lèse-majesté* and treason.—Madame,” added he, turning to Catherine, “you will answer me on the same charges.”

“At once, and boldly, my son,” replied the queen-mother. “You are deceived. The sole traitor stands by your side. I will prove Chevalier Crichton guilty of the crimes you have imputed to me.”

“Let Cosmo Ruggieri stand forth,” said Crichton.

At this summons, the astrologer forced his way through the crowd.

“What hast thou to advance against me?” demanded the queen imperiously.

“That you have conspired against the life of the king, your son, and against his crown,” returned Ruggieri firmly, “and that the Duc de Nevers is your accomplice. Will your majesty deign to regard this scroll?”

“It is thine own condemnation, Ruggieri,” said Henri, glancing at the document; “thou art deeply implicated in this conspiracy.”

“I deny it not,” replied the astrologer; “let equal justice be dealt upon all who have betrayed you.”

“Ruggieri,” said the king, “thy doom is the galleys. De Nevers shall lose his head. For you, madame,” he added, looking at the queen-mother, “I will reflect upon your sentence.”

"I am content," said Ruggieri, with a look of gratified revenge; "one of these accursed Gonzagas will fall by my hands."

"Away with him," said Henri. "Chevalier Crichton," he added, embracing the Scot, "you are my preserver, and henceforth my brother. I have played the tyrant and the libertine long enough. I will now endeavour to assume the part of the generous monarch. The hand of the Princess of Condé is yours—ha! what means this hesitation?"

"Sire! a greater obstacle than you have raised divides us," replied Crichton; "our creeds are different."

"What of that?" said Henri of Navarre, who had joined the group; "Marguerite de Valois is a Catholic. I am a Protestant."

"An excellent example, certes," said Chicot, screaming with laughter.

"There is one favour which you can confer, sire, and which I can accept," said Crichton.

"Name it."

"The freedom of the King of Navarre."

"It is granted," replied Henri, "on the condition that he takes his queen with him."

"Excuse me, sire," replied the Bourbon. "I have too much consideration to separate her from the Admirable Crichton. Fair cousin of Condé, you will accompany me. His majesty has promised you a fitting escort."

"I have," replied Henri, "but I would rather find her a fitting husband."

"Crichton," said Esclairmonde, blushing turning towards her lover, "have I your dispensation if I break my vow?"

"From the bottom of my heart," replied Crichton passionately. "And I begin to find I am not so staunch a Catholic as I fancied myself when I quitted Florent Chrétien's cell."

"I would be of any creed for the woman I love," said the Bourbon.

"And I," said Henri Trois.

"Then no more need be said about the matter," said Chicot. "Let us send for a priest at once. He will remove every difficulty. Points of faith are easily settled where love plays the umpire."

APPENDIX

DURING Crichton's residence in Venice in the autumn of the year 1580, when, as he himself has told us,

*Dum procul a Patria Hadriaci prope litora Ponti
Consedi,——*

when his eloquence had electrified the Doge and the assembled signory—when he had disputed in *utramque partem* upon the subtile doctrines of the Thomists and Scotists (*a parte rei, et a parte mentis*) with the learned Padre Fiamma, e con molti altri valorosi prelati, in the presence of the Cardinal Ludovico D'Este, the patron of Tasso, and the brother of Alfonso the Second, Duke of Ferrara; had discussed with the Greek theologians, in the house of the Patriarch of Aquileia, the mysterious subject of the procession of the Holy Ghost, overwhelming his opponents with the weight of authorities which he adduced; had astonished the ready Italian Improvisatore by a faculty more wonderful than his own; had confounded the mathematician, the astrologer, and the cabalist; had foiled the most expert swordsman and the most brilliant wit at their own weapons—when his grace and beauty had captivated many a fair signora, and his unequalled prowess in the revel and the masque had driven many a rival gallant to despair; and when, at length, satiated with enjoyment, and crowned with success, to escape from the enervating allurements of the sea Phryne, he crossed her blue lagoons, and secluded himself in some villa on the Brenta, to prepare for that final triumph which he was

destined so gloriously to achieve in the three days' disputation held in the Chiesa San Giovanni e Paolo;—then it was, that Aldus Manutius, prompted by his ardent admiration of the youthful Scot, or urged to the task by the curiosity of his noble correspondent, furnished Jacomo Buoncompagno, Duke of Soro, an eminent patron of men of letters, and brother to the reigning pontiff, Gregory the Thirteenth, with the following particulars of the mostro de mostri.

RELATIONE della qualita di JACOMO DI CRETTONE fatta da
ALDO MANUTIO AL DUCA DI SORA Adix Ottobre, 1581.¹

LO SCOZZESE detto Jacomo di Crettone è giovane di xx anni, finiti alli 19 d' Agosto passato, grande di statura, di pelo biondo, e d' aspetto bellissimo. Possiede diece lingue, la latina più bella et più pronta di quella di Monsignore Moretto,² la Francese ed Italiana in eccellenza, la Greca bellissima e ne fa epigrammi, l' Hebreu, la Caldea, la Spagnuola, la Fiamenga, Inglesa, Scozzesa, e intende la Tedesca. Possiede Filosofia, Theologia, Mathematica, ed Astrologia, e tiene tutti i calcoli fatti sin ad hoggi per falsi. Di Filosofia e Theologia ha disputato più volte in questa Città con li primi letterati di questa professione con stupore di tutti. Ha perfettissima cognitione della Cabala, e di memoria tale che non sà che cosa sia il dimenticarsi ed ogni oratione udita da lui recita a parola per parola. Fa versi all' improvviso di tutti li metri, e di tutte le materie vulgare e latine e ne fa improvise e belle. Ragiona di cose di stato con fondamento Cortegiano con maraglivì e gratissimo nelle consultationsi, soldato à tutta

¹ Relatione delle qualita di Jacomo di Cretone fatta da Aldo Manutio all' Illustrimo ed eccelentissimo S. Jacomo Boncompagno Duca di Sora e Gover. Gen di S. C. In Venegia, M.DLXXXI Appresso Aldo.

² The famous Marcus Antonius Muretus, the friend of the Manutii, and one of the most profound scholars of his day. He was succeeded in the Roman chair of philosophy by the younger Aldus. The wonderful skill of Muretus in Latin versification will readily be conceived, when it is stated that he palmed certain scenes of his own composition upon the learned Joseph Scaliger, as fragments of two ancient comic writers, Attius and Trabea, which that great philologist unhesitatingly introduced into his edition of Terentius Varro.

botta, e ha speso due anni in Francia alla guerra con carico assai honorato; salta e balla per eccellenza; armeggia e giuoca d' ogni sorta d' armi e ne ha fatto qui la prova; maneggiatore aggarbato di cavalli, giostratore singolare, di sangue nobile anzi per madre Regale Stuardo.¹ Ha disputato con greci in casa del Nuntio e del Patriarca d' Aquileia in materia della processione del Spirito Santo con grande applauso e con grandissima copia d' autorità de Dottori e consigli come Aristotele e commentatori alle mani recitando le facciate intiere non che le righe greche. Sà tutto S. Thomaso, Scoto, Thomisti e Scotisti a mente, e disputa in utramque partem, il che ha fatto felicemente l' altro giorno col Padre Fiamma, e con molti altri valorosi Prelati alla presenza di Monsignore Illustrissimo il Cardinale da Este. Volse il Patriarca e la Signora udirlo e ne restorono maravigliosi e stupefatti; da S. Serenità fù premiato di 200 scudi. In somma è mostro de mostri, e tale che molti udendo così fatte qualità in un sol corpo benissimo proportionato e lontano dalla malinconia fanno di molte chimere. Hieri si ridusse fuori in villa, per stendere due mila conclusioni le quali in tutte le perfettione vole mantenere qui in Venetia nelle Chiesa di S. Giovan e Paolo; fra due mesi tutto in mondo corre per udirlo.

There is only one perplexing point about this letter; and if I could follow my Uncle Toby's advice to Corporal Trim, and "leave out the date entirely," much

¹ Compare the above description with the following passage from the "Dedication to the Paradoxes of Cicero," subsequently published by Aldus:—"Magna sunt ista profecto, et inaudita: mediocritas tamen, si cetera spectemus; quod, scilicet decem linguarum, multorum idiomatum, omnium disciplinarum cognitionem ante vigesimum primum ætatis annum, sis adeptus; et digladiandi, saltandi, omnium gymnasticarum exercitationum, et equitandi studia, tanta cum alacritate ingenii, animique humanitate, mansuetudine, et facilitate conjunxeris, ut nihil te admirabilius reperiri possit. Sed non innumerabiles vitæ tuæ transactæ laudes; non mirificam illam coram Serenissimo Principe ac Illustrissimis Venetæ Reipublicæ proceribus actionem; non subtilissimas tuas de Theologia, Philosophia et rebus Mathematicis, disputationes in plerisque maximorum hominum concessibus, recensebo; non tantorum hominum ad te videndum concursus, ut olim Platoni a Sicilia revertenti, relicto Olympico spectaculo, tota Atheniensium celebritas occurrisset fertur; cum te omnes, signo ruberæ Rosæ, quod tibi natura circa dextrum lumen impressit, tamquam unicam et raram in terris avem, homines cognoscerent."

tedious speculation might be spared. For the genuineness of the edition in my possession—that it is actually, as its title states, appresso Aldo—I cannot vouch. Counterfeits of the productions of this celebrated press are too numerous and too skilful to suffer me to hazard such an assertion. But at all events it is, beyond doubt, a fac-simile of the original. Obtained from Milan, my copy consists of a few leaves, yellow with age, with the device of the elder Aldus on the title-page, and purports to have been printed “in Venegia, M.DLXXXI.” The memoir is not mentioned by Renouard; nor is it included in the small quarto volume of the Letters of Aldus Manutius, published at Rome, none of which, as Dr. Black observes (for I have not seen the collection), is written prior to 1585. Having premised thus much, I shall proceed with my reasons for the emendation of the date, which, I conceive, should be the 10th of October 1580, not 81. From another contemporary authority (a manuscript chronicle cited by Serassi, the writer of which evidently derived his information from Aldus) we learn that Crichton reached Venice “nel mese d’ Agosto del 1580.” Coupling this intelligence with the final passage of the “Relatione,” “fra due mesi tutto in mondo corre per udirlo,” we have the exact period of his arrival and departure, and my hypothesis is confirmed. He remained in Venice two months. And here I may note that the “Affiche” (the date of which is 1580) is made, owing to its faulty punctuation, to announce to the learned world that Crichton’s disputation in the Church of Saint John and Paul would take place within two months; whereas we are expressly told by Aldus Manutius, who was not only the adviser, but a spectator, of this memorable controversy, that it commenced on the day of Pentecost, 1581. Aldus, indeed, seems to refer to some such panegyric as this “Relatione,” when he states in the “Dedication to the Paradoxes of

Cicero," "nunc vero etiam lætor, toti Italiæ, et orbi fortasse terrarum universo perspectum esse judicium de te meum, ET EA QUAE CUM HUC VENISSES SCRIPTIS COMMENDAVI;" and mark what follows, "quæ tibi ipsi, ac nonnullis acerrimis censoribus, aspera atque injucunda videbantur. Nam, licet tum amorem malui ostendere, quamprudentiam, nunc ambo, cum amicis tuis, tum inimicis, si qui amplius tam feri atque inhumani reperiuntur, manifesta sunt, postquam tua virtus tam clarum sui splendorem diffudit." Influenced by a desire to serve his friend, the great printer may have allowed his letter to the Duke of Sora to be widely circulated, and perhaps connived at its publication by the brothers Guerra, for which injudicious zeal he appears to have incurred the censure, as well of the high-minded object of his adulation, as of those envious detractors, which a celebrity like that of Crichton was certain to awaken. That Dr. Black, after a careful investigation of the collected letters of Aldus, could only discover this solitary passage, which he thinks may relate to Crichton—"Sa V. S. Illustrissima, che io sempre funetus sum officio cotis, o deve ricordarsi dello Scozzese, il quale godè la benignità, e liberalità di cotesta Republica, favorito anche da lei, che si mosse e per favorir lui, e per obligar me—" proves nothing. Aldus might not probably desire to introduce his letter to Buoncompagno in a volume containing a similar eulogy on the Polish Crichton, Stanislaus Niegossevio, addressed to the same nobleman.

It follows, from what has been advanced, that upon the validity of the evidence afforded by Aldus Manutius—whether considered as the author or originator of the "Affiche," the "Relatione," the "Manuscript Chronicle," or the "Dedication to the Paradoxes" (for they are one and the same thing)—rests Crichton's claim to that glorious epithet by which he has since been distinguished. His mighty intellectual powers

are attested by Astolfi and Scaliger : but his universal accomplishments and personal graces are recorded by Imperialis, Dempster, David Buchanan, Johnston, and other later writers, on the testimony of Aldus.¹ And that testimony, notwithstanding it has been impugned by Drs. Kippis and Black, has been satisfactorily shown by Mr. Fraser Tytler to be unimpeachable.

If any proof, indeed, were wanting of the sincerity of Aldus's affection for, and admiration of, his friend, it would be found in the following pathetic lament, which (deceived by a false rumour of Crichton's death) he inscribed to his memory :—

ALDUS MANUTIUS TO THE MEMORY OF JAMES CRICHTON

"O Crichton, it is just that praise should attend thy memory, since we have been deprived of thee by an untimely death ! Who is there that did not admire thee in life ? who that does not mourn thee dead ? While alive, the judgment I had formed of thy merits was my honour and advantage, and now that thou art no more, my grief is immeasurable. Would to God thou wert yet alive, and that this fatal land (though the native country of Virgil) had never possessed thee ! For such has been our wretched destiny, that the same land which to him gave birth, should in this latter year deprive thee of life (alas, in thy twenty-second year, a span of existence, though sufficient for thy glory, yet too short for us). For ever shall I revere thy memory ! For ever shall thy image be present to my eyes ! To me thou wilt ever be the

¹ It may be curious to glance at the different terms of eulogy applied to Crichton by various authors. By Aldus Manutius, in the "*Relatione*" and the "*Affiche*," he is styled "*mostro de mostri*;" by the same writer, in the "*Dedication to the Paradoxes of Cicero*," "*unicam et raram in terris avem*;" and in the address prefixed to the "*Dialogue de Amicitia*," "*divinum plane juvenem*;" by Astolfi, "*mostro maraviglioso*;" by Imperialis, "*sæculi monstrum—orbis phoenix—dæmonium prorsus*;" by Scaliger, "*ingenium prodigiosum*;" by Boccalini (satirically), "*il portento di natura*;" by Rotinus, "*Phoenix Critonius*;" by Ronconius, "*Ingenio Phoenix*;" by Dempster, "*miraculum orbis*;" by Johnston, "*omnibus in studiis admirabilis*;" by Abernethy, "*Juvenis incomparabilis*;" and by Sir Thomas Urquhart he was first entitled, "*THE ADMIRABLE CRICHTON !*"

same, ever cherished in my heart, as in the affections of all worthy men! God grant that thy lot above may be the consummation of heavenly felicity, as on earth thou wert ever attached to what was of heavenly origin, and ever employed in the contemplation of such objects. O melancholy day, the 3rd of July! This to thee I write, from this melancholy sojourn on earth, to that heavenly habitation, with my earnest prayer for every blessing to thy spirit!"¹

The date of this affectionate tribute is the 4th of November 1583; it is prefixed to the Aldine edition of "Cicero de Universitate." I mention these circumstances because they are important to the consideration of two inedited poems of Crichton, which have fallen into my hands, to which I shall now proceed.

I do not know how I can better introduce this subject than in the words of Mr. Tytler. "Serassi," says this gentleman,² "an author of high character for accuracy, asserts that he has amongst his miscellanies an 'Epicedion,' written on the death of the cardinal and saint, Charles Borromeo, by James Crichton, a Scotsman, and printed the very day after his death. Serassi copies the title of this 'Epicedion' verbatim, and evidently must have had it before him when he wrote the passage. All supposition of mistake upon his part is thus nearly precluded. The coincidence of the two names, Jacobus Critonius, the additional appellative Scotus, and the circumstance that the elegy was written, printed, and published the day after the death of the cardinal, fixes the poem upon James Crichton of Cluny; as the improbability of the supposition that there should have been another Scotsman of the name of James Crichton in Italy, in the year 1584, possessed of the same remarkable facility in poetical composition, is quite apparent. And lastly, the subject on which this elegy was composed, renders any

¹ This translation appears in Dr. Black's "Life of Tasso." It was furnished by Lord Woodhouselee.

² "Life of Crichton," pp. 211, 212, 213. Second edition.

error almost impossible. Had it been a poem on any indifferent subject, or a prose work relating to any disputed point in physics or in morals, we might have been allowed to conjecture that the date 1584 was erroneous; but the death of the cardinal, Charles Borromeo, fixes us down to a certain time. An 'Epicedion' on this venerable character could not have been written anterior to the year 1584. On the one hand, therefore, we have Aldus, Imperialis, and all his succeeding biographers, fixing the death of Crichton to the year 1582 or 1583; on the other hand, we have it asserted, that the Admirable Crichton, on the 4th of November 1584, composed an 'Epicedion' on the Cardinal Borromeo. On which side the truth lies must be left for future writers to discern."

To this I answer by printing the "Epicedion" in question.

EPICEDIUM ILLUSTRISSIMI ET REVERENDISSIMI CARDINALIS
CAROLI BOROMÆI, AB IACOBO CRITONIO SCOTO, ROGATU
CLARISSIMI, SUMMAQUE IN OPTIMUM PASTOREM SUUM
PIETATE, VIRI IOANNIS ANTONII MAGII MEDIOLANEM.
PROXIMO POST OBITUM DIE EXARATUM. DE CONSENSU
SUPERIORUM. [MEDIOLANI. EX TYPOGRAPHIA PACIFICI
PONTIJ M.DLXXXIII.]

Heu pullâ clamyde, et scissis Elegia capillis
Prodeat, et calamos Egloga nacta nigros.
Nox erat, et mœstas agitabam pectore curas,
Horaque me noctis tertia vexat atrox.
Nulla datur requies; sed mens insana vagatur
Semper, et objectis horret imaginibus.
Ast tandem sero declinant lumino somno,
Et (dolor) obrepunt somnia dira mihi.
Namque fretum ingressus portu prodire videbar,
Quique ratem regeret Navita nullus erat.
Hic Ephyre, Drymo, Cydippe, Glaucia, Doris,
Xanthia, Cymodoce, Lysis et Opis erant.
Hæc velut in gyrum duplicato poplite fertur,
Remigat hæc pedibus, nec resupina jacet.

Intonat horrissono Cœlum se murmure miscens,
Hinc Notus, hinc Boreas, Africus inde ruunt.
Involuere diem nubes, cæcæque tenebræ
Insurgunt, et nox ingruit atra salo.
Deficit eximio spoliata carina Magistro,
Atque procellosis ingemit icta notis.
Extimui, steteruntque comæ, et timor occupat artus,
Proh dolor, en veris somnia mixta noto.
Pro stupor, Arctois peregrinus Scotus ab oris,
Nauclerum Latii defleo jure pium.
Flete Viri, lugete senes, discindite vultus
O pueri, heu juvenes imbre rigate genas.
Stridulus emissis certatim ululatibus æther
Horreat, et finem non habeant gemitus,
Quales cum Troiæ jam tum Fortuna labaret,
Iliades scisso crine dedere Nurus.
Ne mea suspensum teneant te metra, benigne
Lector, Christigenæ Navita, puppis hic est.
CAROLUS Insubri BOROMÆUS sanguine cretus,
Cui virtus claro stemmate major erat.
CAROLUS æterno BOROMÆUS Numine fultus,
Et miseræ gentis dux foret ille suæ.
Non prece, non pretio, non vi sed cœlitus alnum,
Illius textit purpura sacra caput.
Menteque perpetuâ Christum spectabat IESVM,
Purpureos inter gloria summa Patres.
Non aliter quàm vel radiis solaribus æther
Cynthia vel bigis nox taciturna suis.
Scilicet Insubres vitio rem mole ruentes,
Erexit præsul dexteritate pius.
Erectosque manu validâ fulcivit Ephebus,
Contudit et sacra relligione scelus.
Hunc Deus elegit solidæ pietatis alumnum,
Ut magnus patriæ splendor ubique foret.
Sæpius ille homines mediâ de morte recepit,
Quum pestis latè serperet atra Lues.
Ille Dei classem remis, velisque carentem
Instituit medio Fortins ire freto.
Et licet extinctus sit corpore nomine vivit,
Cujus fama nitent pulsat utrumque polum.
In quo virtutes fixere sedilia cunctæ,
De vitiisque ferunt alta trophæa Deo.
Integritas animi, placidoque modestia vultu,
Et nullis probitas contemerata malis.
Despectusque sui, legis respectus avitæ,
Providus, et casto plenus amore timor.

Factis culta fides, non solis fumea verbis,
 Sed supero accensas quæ dat ab igne faces.
 Aures nobilibus mites præbebat; egenis
 Consuluit pariter nobilis ille parens.
 Ergo non alio fas est hunc nomine dici.
 Quam sua, quo, pietas nota sit, atque fides.
 Sic virtute sua clarus, nec carmine nostro,
 Laude nec alterius clarior esse potest.
 Haud equidem varios cristallina globa colores
 Tot dabit, hic morum quot simulachra nitent,
 Et tamen (o Pietas), vitales exuit auras,
 Et cœli proprias itque reditque vias.
 Eheu nil valuit fugientem sistere vitam,
 Ah nil morte homini certius esse patet.
 Illa malis requiem, metamque laboribus affert,
 Omniaque alternas constat habere vices,
 Sic pluvialis hyems, Zephyro spirante recedit,
 Sic pia nauclerus præmia vester habet.
 Admonet ecce Deus, Deus æthere missus ab alto,
 Currat ut in portus tuta carina suos.
 Interea Præsul visit pia fana Varallæ,
 Ut præsagus olor fata subire parans.
 Sanctè, quem dederat, cursum Natura peregit,
 Molliter ossa cubant, spiritus astra colit.
 Quem nunc felicem, terris pelagoque relictis,
 Fatidico cecinit Delphicus ore Deus.¹

EPICEDIUM

ON THE

CARDINAL CARLO BORROMEO

With black funereal robe, and tresses shorn,
 O'erwhelmed with grief, sad Elegy appears;
 And, by her side, sits Ecloga forlorn,
 Blotting each line she traces with her tears.

¹ A free translation of this Elegy will be found as above. A copy alluded to by M. Eyriès (the writer of the article on "Crichton" in the "Biog. Universelle") is preserved in the Bibliothèque du Roi at Paris, of which I have procured a transcript, agreeing in all respects with another impression obtained from Milan.

'Twas night!—long pondering on my secret woes,
The third hour broke upon my vigil lone ;
Far from my breast had sorrow chased repose,
And fears presageful threatened ills unknown.

Slumber, at length, my heavy eyelids sealed ;
The self-same terrors scared me as I slept :
Portentous dreams events to come revealed,
And o'er my couch fantastic visions swept.

Upon the shoreless sea methought I sailed,
No helmsman steered the melancholy bark ;
Around its sides the pitying Nereids wailed,
Cleaving with snow-white arms the waters dark.

Cydicpe, dolphin-borne, Ephyra fair,
And Xanthia leave their halcyon-haunted caves,
With Doris and Cymodece to share
The maddening strife of storm-awaken'd waves.

Drawn, unresisting, where the whirling gyre
Vexes the deep, the ship her prow inclines ;
While, like a Pharos' gleam, the lightning's fire
Over the raging vortex redly shines.

Mix'd with the thunder's roar that shakes the skies,
Notus and Africus and Boreas sound ;
Black wreathing clouds, like shadowy legions, rise,
Shrouding the sea in midnight gloom profound.

Disabled, straining, by the tempest lashed,
Reft of her storm-tried helmsman's guiding hand,
The vessel sinks!—amid the surges dashed,
Vainly I struggle—vainly cry for land !

Alas ! stern truths with dreams illusive meet !
Latium the shipwreck of her hopes deplores !
The pious leader of the Insubrian fleet
I mourn—a wandering Scot from Northern shores !

Weep, youths ! weep, aged men ! weep ! rend your hair !
Let your wild plaints be on the breezes tost !
Weep, virgins ! matrons ! till your loud despair
Outbraves her children's wail for Ilion lost !

In that wreck'd bark the Ship of Christ behold !
 In its lost chief the Cardinal divine,
 Of princely Lombard race ;¹ whose worth untold
 Eclipsed the lofty honours of his line.

His suffering countrymen to rule, sustain,
 By the All-wise was BORROMEO given ;
 And he, who stoop'd not dignity to gain,²
 Derived his high investiture from heaven.

Bright as the sun o'er all pre-eminent,
 Or Cynthia glittering from her star-girt throne,
 The saintly CHARLES, on truths sublime intent,
 Amid the purple hierarchy shone.

The Christian fleet, devoid of helm and sail,³
 He mann'd and led where roughest billows roll,
 And, though no more his virtues wide prevail,
 Their sacred influence spreads from pole to pole.

His was the providence that all foresees,
 His, the trust placed, unchangeably, above ;
 His, strict observance of his sires' decrees,
 Rapt adoration, and fear-chasten'd love.

¹ Saint Carlo Borromeo was born at Arona, near the Lago Maggiore, the loveliest of Italian lakes, on the 2nd of October 1538. His family was, and still continues to be, the most illustrious in Lombardy. It derives, however, its proudest distinction from its connection with the virtuous cardinal and his exalted nephew Frederigo, whose sublime character has been of late so exquisitely portrayed by Manzoni. If ever man deserved canonisation, it was the subject of this elegy, whose whole life was spent in practices of piety ; and whose zeal, munificence, wisdom, toleration, and beneficence, have conferred lasting benefits on his creed and country.

² He was made Cardinal and Archbishop in his twenty-third year by his uncle, Pius the Sixth, who had resigned several rich livings to him twelve years before.—EUSTACE : *Classical Tour through Italy*.

³ Borromeo found the diocese of Milan in the most deplorable state of disorder. But with a vigorous and unsparing hand he reformed all ecclesiastical abuses—"C'est ainsi," observes M. Tabaurand, the writer of his life in the "Biog. Universelle," "que l'Eglise de Milan, tombée dans une espèce d'anarchie depuis quatrevingts ans que ses archevêques n'y résidaient pas, reçut en peu d'années cette forme admirable qui, par le vie toute angélique de son clergé, la rendit le modèle de toutes les autres Eglises. Tant de reformes ne purent se faire sans de grands obstacles, qu'il surmonta par sa fermeté, sa patience et son imperturbable charité."

The faith in practice, not profession, shown,
Which borrows all its glory from on high
Was his;—nor did his holiness alone,
Consist in outward forms of sanctity.

A willing ear unto the nobly born,
Nobler himself, he ne'er refused to yield;
Nor Jesus' meek disciple, did he scorn
The humble prayer that to his heart appealed.¹

Can no remembrance dearer than his name
Bequeathed us, link his memory with the earth;
Nor can my praise add lustre to his fame—
Proud heritage of unexampled worth!²

When, o'er his desolated city, fell
The livid plague's inexorable breath,
Oft, in the lazaretto's tainted cell,
Fervent he prayed, beside the couch of death.³

As through the fane the pale procession swept,⁴
Before its shrine he bent in lowliest wise;
Imploring Heaven, in mercy, to accept
His life, for them, a willing sacrifice.

¹ So unbounded was Borromeo's charity, that he sold his principality of Oria, and distributed the proceeds amongst the poor.

² The private virtues of Saint Charles, that is, the qualities which give true sterling value to the man, and sanctify him to the eyes of his Creator—I mean humility, self-command, temperance, industry, prudence, and fortitude—were not inferior to his public endowments. His table was for his guests; his own diet was confined to bread and vegetables; he allowed himself no amusement or relaxation, alleging that the variety of his duties was in itself a sufficient recreation. His dress and establishment were such as became his rank, but in private he dispensed with the attendance of servants, and wore an under dress, coarse and common; his bed was of straw; his repose short; and in all the details of life he manifested an utter contempt of personal ease and indulgence.—*Eustace*.

³ During a destructive pestilence he erected a lazaretto, and served the forsaken victims with his own hands.—*Eustace*.

⁴ The incidents described in this and the following stanza do not occur in the original. As, however, they appear necessary to complete the picture of the holy primate's career presented by the poem, I have ventured upon their introduction. These actions, as well as his heroic devotion to the plague-stricken in the lazaretto, mentioned in the preceding verse, form subjects for part of the eight magnificent silver bas-reliefs which adorn the vaulted

When from the assassin's arm the bullet sped,
 He blench'd not, nor his deep devotions stopt;
 "Be not dismay'd in heart!"—the anthem said,
 He rose—the bullet from his vestment dropt!¹

Not in the prism more varied hues reside,
 Than bright examples in his course are traced:—
 Alas! his longer sojourn here denied,
 His guiding star is from its sphere effaced.

Alas! life's ebbing tide no hindrance knows!
 With man is nothing certain but to die!
 Mortality, alone, presents a close
 Immutable, 'mid mutability.

As, in some stream remote, the swan expires,
 Breathing, unheard, her fate-foreboding strain,
 So the declining Cardinal retires
 To steep Varalla's solitary fane.²

roof of the gorgeous subterranean chapel in the Duomo at Milan, where the body of the saint reposes enshrined amid "barbarie pearl and gold." During the period of the plague, Borromeo was indefatigable in his exertions to arrest the terrible calamity. "Cherchant," says M. Tabouraud, "à désarmer la colère du ciel par des processions générales, auxquelles il assistait nu-pieds, la corde au cou, les yeux fixés sur son crucifix, qu'il arrosait de ses larmes, en s'offrant à Dieu comme une victime de propitiation pour les péchés de son peuple!"

¹ The ecclesiastical reformation effected by Saint Charles met, as was natural, with considerable opposition on the part of the corrupt and disorderly priesthood, and he became the object of their bitterest animosity. "Les plus opposés à la réforme," writes M. Tabouraud; "suscitèrent un frère *Farina*, qui se posta à l'entrée de la chapelle archiépiscopale, où le Saint Prélat faisait sa prière avec toute sa maison: et, au moment où l'on chantait cette antienne: *Non turbetur cor vestrum neque formidet*, l'assassin, éloigné seulement de cinq ou six pas, tire un coup d'arquebuse sur Saint Charles, à genoux devant l'autel. A ce bruit, le chant cesse, la consternation est générale; le Saint, sans s'émouvoir, fait signe de continuer la prière: il se croyait cependant blessé mortellement, et offrait à Dieu le sacrifice de sa vie. *La prière finie, il se relève, et voit tomber à ses pieds la balle qu'on lui avait tirée dans le dos, et qui n'avait fait qu'effleurer son rochet.*"—*Biog. Universelle*. The holy primate endeavoured, ineffectually, to preserve Farina and the instigators of his crime from the punishment they merited. They were put to death, and Pius the Sixth dissolved the order (*Gli Umili*) to which they belonged.

² The Monastery of Monte Varalla is situated in the Piedmontese states, near the banks of the Sesia. Thither Saint

Like the fair flower that springs from winter's crust,
 Lombards! your Primate bursts his earthly chains;
 And, in his Father's mansion with the Just,
 A portion and inheritance obtains.¹

Within his chosen tomb calm may he sleep!²
 Beatified, aloft, his spirit soars!
 While Virtue's loss irreparable, deep,
 With reverential grief the Muse deplores.

The authenticity of this poem cannot for an instant be disputed. It bears the strongest internal evidence of emanating from the same mind that conceived the "Appulsus ad Venetam;" and the vexata quæstio so long agitated, as to Crichton's having survived the perilous nones of July, may be now considered finally settled. As an extemporaneous effusion (and its author twice intimates that it is to be so esteemed), it must be allowed to be a remarkable production. Its versification is singularly fluent and harmonious; and it breathes a spirit of tender melancholy perfectly in unison

Charles retired immediately previous to his dissolution, attended only by his confessor, the Jesuit Adorno,—and returned thence to Milan in a dying state. "Franciscum Adornum Societatis Jesu plurimi fecit qui cum in extremo vitæ curriculo per dies plurimos, quo tempore in Monte Varallo meditationibus se totum tradiderat CAROLUS ab ejus latere nunquam discesserit."—*Caroli Cardin. Borromæi Vita*—*Valerio*. Antoine Godeau, Bishop of Grasse, who has written the life of the illustrious Primate, gives the following particulars of his melancholy visit to the Monastery:—"Encore que toute la vie de SAINT CHARLES fust une retraite mentale, toutefois il avait accoutumé d'en faire une locale tous les ans en quelque monastère écarté, où il employoit quelques jours pour faire une revue sévère de sa vie, et pour prendre un nouvel esprit de zèle et de piété. Avant que de s'en retourner à Milan, il voulut passer au *Mont Varalle*, dont nous avons parlé, et y faire ses exercices."—*Vie de S. Ch. Borromée: Liv. ii. Ch. dernier*. M. Mellin, in his *Voyage dans le Milanais*, describing the mountain oratory of Varese, observes:—"On va de là à *Varalle*, où les Histoires de l'Ancien et du Nouveau-Testament sont figurées dans cinquante-deux chapelles."

¹ The earthly pilgrimage of Saint Charles terminated on the 4th of November 1584, at the age of forty-six years. He was canonised by Paul the Fifth in 1610.

² "Cupiens hoc loco sibi monumentum vivens elegit."—*Epitaph inscribed upon Borromeo's tomb by his own desire*.

with the subject. It was dashed off at a heat, at the request of a friend, with its writer's characteristic rapidity; and, if we should fail to discover passages of such transcendent beauty as might be expected from a genius of an order so high as that of Crichton, we must bear in mind the disadvantageous circumstances under which, in all probability, it was composed. The grief of the youthful Scot was, I am persuaded, no poetic fiction. Be this as it may, his reputation will suffer no diminution from the connection of this "Epicedion" with his name.

Famigeras iterum Critonius exit in auras
Et volat ingenio docta per ora virûm.

Not only, however, was Crichton alive in November 1584—not only on the death of the divine Borromeo did he pour forth his elegiac strains; but in the succeeding month we have further proof of his existence and unabated poetical powers in the following congratulatory address, with which he celebrated the induction of Gaspar Visconti to the archiepiscopal see of Milan.

JACOBI CRITONII SCOTI AD AMPLISSIMUM AC REVERENDISSIMUM VIRUM GASPAREM VICECOMITEM¹ SUMMA OMNIUM ORDINUM VOLUNTATE AD PRÆCLARAM ARCHIEPISCOPATUS MEDIOLANEN. ADMINISTRATIONEM, DELECTUM.

GRATULATIO.²

Primus in Exquiis ferali carmine Scotus
Pastoris dolui funera mœsta pii.
Funera mœsta pii BOROMÆI Præsulis ah ah,
Deplanxit tristi nostra Thalia stylo.

¹ Gaspar Visconti, a prelate eminent for learning and piety (though thrown into the shade by the superior sanctity of his immediate precursor and successor, Saint Charles, and Frederick Borromeo), was appointed to the archbishopric of Milan on the 29th of November, and consecrated during the ides of December 1584 (vide "Saxii Series Archiep. Mil." Tom. III.), the period when Crichton's congratulatory poem was published. A translation of the address will be found in page 258.

² MEDIOLANI: *Ex Typographia Pacijici Pontii*, M.DLXXXIII.

Aspice post nimbos, nitidum quàm sæpe reducat
 Vectus Lucifero Cynthus axe, diem.
 Namque salo pridem Navis spoliata Magistro,
 More poetarum, fluctibus obruitur.
 Sævitis hyems, venti ingeminant striduntque rudentes
 Sollicitoque tremunt corda pavore virum.
 Nec spes ulla fuit melior, quin deficit omnis
 Naucleri posito, turba, magisterio.
 Nec quicquam nisi vota facit divosque deasque
 Orat, ut afflictis rebus adesse velint.
 Tanta sed æterni fuerit clementia Patris
 Ut non humanas deservisset opes.
 Sic pelagi tandem compescuit Æolus æstus,
 Atque reluctantes traxit in antra Notos.
 Et caput exeruit formosior æquore Titan,
 Illuxit votis mille petita dies.
 Ecce velut fulgur media quod nocte coruscat,
 Alter adest præstans navita puppis, Iö,
 Cujus opes magnas, virtus et gloria longè
 Exuperant, hujus non levis urbis honor.
 Rostra Rotæ,¹ Romæ, rectâ ratione rotabat,
 Rimantique ratem relligione reget.
 Colloquio præsens præsentum denique novi,
 Sensibus iniecit qui pia vincla meis.
 Præsule ter felix o nunc Insubria tali,
 Inclyta cui virtus cernitur esse parens.
 Quem propriis ultrò tendentem laudibus, omnes
 Hoc norunt sacrum promeruisse jubar.
 Currite jam cives, dignis ornate lapillis,
 Nobile, facundum, conspicuumque caput
 Exoptatus ades patriæ rectorque paterque
 GASPARE præsignis nomine reque Comes.
 Quid potuit mœstæ contingere lætius Urbi?
 Qui suavi pasces pectora nostra cibo.
 Participes hujus concurrunt undique gentes
 Lætitiæ, et cura est omnibus una tui,
 Deponunt luctus, et te succedere gaudent,
 Nam cui succedis non latet orbe viros.

¹ The well-known Papal court called the *Rota*. Gaspar Visconti was one of the twelve judges, as we learn from Saxius, who says that he proceeded to Rome—*ut una cum auditoribus quos vocant ROTÆ ROMANÆ in eo insigni sapientum collegio consideret*. The reader will admire the singular alliterative splendour of this couplet.

Illum Sarmaticus Boreas, et Caucasus asper
 Protulerit, Charites qui neget ore tuas.
 Magnanimum sydus, tu gloria splendor avorum,
 Tu generis columnen, portus et aura tui.
 Integritas morum, pietas, facundia, virtus,
 Musa, tibi probitas, dexteritasque placent.
 Relligione Numam, antiquum gravitate Catonem,
 Augustum illustrem nobilitate refers.
 Hinc te GREGORIUS, summi qui Numinis instar,
 Clavigerâ, reserat regna beata, manu.
 Eximio magnus donavit munere Pastor,
 Ut tegat emeritas sacra Tiara comas.
 Auguriis sibi quisque animum felicibus implet,
 Exoptat longos, et tibi quisque dies.
 CRITONIUS Scotis Arctoæ in finibus oræ
 Progenitus, GASPARE, gratulor ecce tibi,
 Sis felix, carmenque meum lege fronte serenâ,
 Gaudebit, Præsul, Musa favore tuo.
 CIQ IO XXCIV. V. Idus Decembris.

TO GASPARE VISCONTI

When her fair land with grief o'erspread,
 Insubria mourn'd her Primate dead ;
 When Borromeo to the tomb
 Was borne 'mid all-pervading gloom ;
 When dimm'd with tears was every eye,
 When breathed one universal sigh,
 The sorrowing lyre for him who slept,
 I first—a Scottish minstrel—swept.

The night is pass'd, and dawn awakes,
 Bright Cynthius through the vapour breaks,
 And Lucifer, with cheering beams,
 From out his golden axle gleams.
 Where late upon the raging sea
 The wild winds rush'd tumultuously,
 And the frail bark by surges tost,
 Her tempest-braving helmsman lost,
 Her timbers strain'd, her canvas riven,
 Wide o'er the weltering waste was driven,
 While her pale crew, with fear aghast,
 Gazed (as they deem'd) on heaven their last !
 With shrieks their hapless fate bewailing !
 With prayers the threatening skies assailing!—

—A change is wrought!—hushed are the gales!
 A soft and summer calm prevails;
 And the glad ship, in safety, glides
 Over the gently rolling tides.
 In troops o'er the ocean's broad expanse
 Day's rosy harbingers advance;
 Bland Eolus careers the wave,
 Fierce Notus hurries to his cave;
 Young Titan from the waters springs,
 With new-born lustre on his wings;
 And over all things shines that sun,
 Whose light a thousand vows have won.

Iö! with shouts the deck resound!
 Iö! another chief is found!
 Another leader hath been sent
 To rule the Christian armament;
 Whose firmness and undaunted zeal
 Ensure uninterrupted weal:
 Whose voice the Roman Rota sway'd,
 Whose laws that synod sage obey'd;
 Whose hand will guide with equal ease,
 Religion's bark through stormy seas:
 Whose power in exhortation shown,
 Whose wisdom I myself have known;
 When by his eloquence subdued,
 In admiration lost, I stood.
 Rejoice, thrice-happy Lombardy!
 That such a chief is given to thee!
 A chief so free from aught of sin,
 Virtue might be his origin:
 Whose heavenly purpose, onward-tending,
 Whose resolution calm, unbending,
 Shall lead thee through the shades of night
 To realms of everlasting light.

Haste, Milanese! your Primate greet:
 Prelates! your leader fly to meet!
 Run, maidens! youths! let each one bring
 Some gift, some worthy offering!
 Surrounding nations hail your choice,
 Surrounding nations loud rejoice!
 Like him, whom ye have lost, was none
 Save him your choice has fall'n upon!

A father fond, a ruler wise,
 GASPAR, in thee, we recognise:

Thy name, VISCONTI, seems to be
 An earnest of prosperity.
 To us thou art in our distress
 As manna in the wilderness,
 Inhospitable Caucasus,
 Sarmatian Boreas rigorous,
 Seize on the caitiff, who denies
 Thy all-acknowledg'd charities !
 A glory art thou, and a star,
 A light, a Pharos seen afar !
 And, clothed with majesty divine,
 Shalt prove the pillar of thy line.
 High rectitude and prescience
 Are thine, and wide beneficence :
 A Numa in thy sanctity,
 A Cato in thy gravity,
 Augustus in nobility.
 Hence the High Pontiff Gregory,¹
 Who holds of Paradise the key,
 For thee earth's chains hath cast aside,
 For thee heaven's gate hath opened wide ;
 Milan's white robe hath round thee spread,
 Her mitre placed upon thy head.
 In thy blest advent all men see
 Of peace a certain augury ;
 All tongues are clamorous in thy praise,
 All prayers are for thy length of days.
 Amid the crowd, I, CRICHTON, born
 On Caledonian shores forlorn,
 Not all unknown, congratulate
 Thee, GASPAR, on thine honour'd state.
 Perpetual happiness be thine !
 Thy bright, approving smile be mine !
 Nor let thy taste, severe, disdain,
 Primate, this welcome-breathing strain.

Unnoticed by, and evidently unknown to, all his former biographers, this congratulatory poem closes the intellectual career of the Admirable Crichton.² All beyond is wrapped in obscurity.

¹ Gregory the Thirteenth, the Pope by whom Gaspar Visconti was appointed to the Archiepiscopal see of Milan.

² Any further information respecting Crichton will probably be derived from the voluminous manuscript letters of San Carlo Borromeo, preserved in the Ambrosian Library at Milan ; from

To the consideration of the present and the preceding performance should be brought a knowledge of Crichton's strong devotion to the Church of Rome ; to that ancient faith—shorn of its glory in his own land—for which, after encountering those unhappy differences adverted to by Aldus (*prælia domestica contra te suscitata quæ cum patre gessisti*), and rejecting the brilliant offers held out to him by the leaders of the popular faith, whose cause and opinions his family had embraced, he had so long absented himself from his country, his friends, his home.¹

Attached to the Church of Rome, he was necessarily attached to her priesthood. Milan, under the sway of the divine Borromeo, became the model of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. To Milan, Crichton repaired. His grief for the loss of the exalted primate was deep and heartfelt ; his rejoicing at the appointment of his successor, whose piety he himself, as he informs us, had approved—

Whose power in exhortation shown,
Whose wisdom, I myself have known,
When by his eloquence subdued,
In admiration lost, I stood—

was unfeigned :—and if the verses just quoted do nothing more, they at least prove that the adherence to the faith of his ancestry, which sent him forth a wanderer from their heresy-girt halls, was still unchanged.

Efforts have been made on the part of some recent writers to shake the celebrity of the Admirable Scot, by assailing the few poetical pieces which he has left us, and by measuring the grasp of his intellect by this unfair standard. This is to judge of the fire of Sappho by her twin odes ; of the comic humour of

the letters of Sperone Speroni, in the edition of Forcellini, which have not come under my observation ; or from some contemporary memoir or correspondence published at Mantua.

¹ Quod scilicet regno, patria, domoque, ob Catholicæ fidei ardorem, tam longue abes.—*Aldi Dedicatio in Paradoxa Ciceronis.*

Menander by his fragments. The prejudices of the learned biographer of Tasso must indeed have been blinding, if he could see no beauties in the "Appulsus"—no inspiration, no poetic nerve, no classic taste and feeling in the odes to Massa and Donatus. It is not, however, from what remains to us of his writings, but from the effect produced upon his contemporaries (and such contemporaries), that we can form a just estimate of the extent of Crichton's powers. By them he was esteemed a miracle of learning—*divinum plane juvenem*: and we have an instance in our own times of a great poet and philosopher, whose published works scarcely bear out the high reputation he enjoyed for colloquial ability. The idolised friend of Aldus Manutius, of Lorenzo Massa, Giovanni Donati, and Sperone Speroni, amongst the most accomplished scholars of their age; the antagonist of the redoubted Arcangelus Mercenarius and Giacomo Mazzoni—(whose memory was so remarkable that he could recite entire books of Dante, Ariosto, Virgil, and Lucretius, and who had sounded all the depths of philosophy)—could not have been other than an extraordinary person; and we may come to the conclusion respecting him, arrived at by Dr. Johnson, that "whatever we may suppress as surpassing credibility, yet we shall, upon incontestable authority, relate enough to rank him among prodigies."



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